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Press Release

For immediate release

July 16, 2007

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IBEW Local 18 releases video about the crisis in the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power

DWP Workers rally at DWP Headquarters, 111 N. Hope St. at 1 p.m. to present dramatic video to the DWP Commission

Los Angeles – On Tuesday, July 17th, members of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers Local 18, which represents nearly 8000 workers at the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power, are releasing a dramatic video designed to alert the public and decision makers to the crisis at the DWP. Copies of the video, which is titled “LADWP Crisis” will be presented to the DWP Commissioners at their meeting today at DWP headquarters at 111 N. Hope St.

DWP employees will rally at the DWP headquarters starting at 1 p.m. to draw attention to their demand that the DWP take immediate steps to reinvest in the DWP’s infrastructure and workforce in order to alleviate harmful understaffing and to begin a real program of testing, maintenance and updating of the aging water and power system. As a show of their commitment, the employees will wear T-shirts with the cover art of the video.

The premise of the video is simple. Since 1994, when DWP workers won kudos for their timely response to the Northridge earthquake, the DWP has reduced critical staff to the point where basic maintenance and updating of the system goes undone. Furthermore, the DWP has not updated its equipment, the average age of which is 60 years old, twice its expected lifespan. The DWP has also failed to take steps to deal with increased demands for both water and power because of the growth of population in the City of Los Angeles. The result is a system that is unable to deal with a prolonged heat wave, like that in the summer of 2006, let alone a terrorist attack, an earthquake, or other catastrophe.

“Our members are angry and frustrated,” said Brian D’Arcy, Business Manager of Local 18. “They take great pride in serving the ratepayers of Los Angeles. However, their voice has gone unheard by the decision makers at the DWP. They feel an obligation to warn the public about the threat to their ability to continue to deliver reliable power and safe drinking water.”

Recent press reports have focused on the DWP’s plan to replace faulty transformers. However, they fail to inform the public that there is still a backlog of over 100 faulty transformers from the summer of 2006 and that number increases by 2 to 3 daily. Furthermore, the problem really goes much farther than just transformers according to D’Arcy.

“The whole power system—from power generation to receiving stations to neighborhood transformers—is badly in need of updating and repair,” said D’Arcy. “The heart of the problem is the chronic understaffing at the DWP. Even if they have 3,000 transformers in stock, they don’t have the trained personnel to install them. And the situation with water is just as bad.”

D’Arcy brushes aside the DWP’s claims that they have a plan to make the system more reliable and that they have put an additional 750 positions in this year’s budget. “The DWP has a history of big promises and small delivery. They still haven’t built a much needed line station in the West Valley that they promised five years ago. And they haven’t taken any steps toward hiring the staff that is already in the budget,” observed D’Arcy. “If there is a plan, it is the best kept secret in Los Angeles. It is past time for them to stop promising and start delivering.”

The IBEW plans to continue its education campaign by distributing copies of the DVD to key decision makers including the mayor, the city council, Los Angeles legislators and the media.

“Our members feel they owe it to the ratepayers of Los Angeles to let them know about issues that affect their ability to enjoy safe and reliable drinking water and a stable supply of power. If there is a failure the burden will fall heaviest on the most vulnerable people in our community. We hope to educate everyone about the steps that must be taken now to restore the DWP to the level of reliability that Angelenos expect and deserve,” concluded D’Arcy.

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