

# Paid maternity leave for Iron Workers

New policy aimed at bringing more women into construction industry

Contractors signatory to Iron Workers union locals will start providing paid maternity leave for women in their trade. The announcement was made last month at the Ironworker Management Progressive Action Co-operative Trust (IMPACT) conference in San Diego.

“We are very proud to be the first to introduce a paid maternity program in the building trades,” said Iron Workers General President Eric Dean. “It’s about time we make our industry a level playing field for women and make diversity and inclusion a priority.”

The Iron Workers’ paid maternity leave includes 6 months of pre-delivery maximum benefit and 6 to 8 weeks of post-delivery benefit. Regardless of what was covered pre-delivery, the ironworker member will be eligible for up to six weeks of paid leave after the birth of the child and two additional weeks

for Cesarean deliveries.

“I’m extremely excited about this policy and I think it’s going to help with retention of ironworker women and encourage them to build a career,” said Vicki O’Leary, an Ironworker representative who made the announcement during a panel discussion at the IMPACT conference that focused on the role of women ironworkers.

“It’s one more step in achieving greater diversity in our trade,” she said.

Bill Brown, CEO of Ben Hur Construction Co. and co-chair of IMPACT, said when the group first started talking about maternity leave, he wasn’t sure how they would pull it off and what it would cost.

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“But we realized that it’s an investment because we want our well-trained ironworker women to come back to work,” he said.

It is a laudable move considering that the U.S. lags behind its European counterparts when it comes to paid maternity leave, and most industries in the country do not offer adequate paid maternity leave.

“It’s a relief to know that female ironworkers don’t have to choose between work and family anymore,” said Blue Coble an ironworker from Local 75 in Phoenix, Arizona.

IMPACT is a labor-management partnership that provides a forum for union Ironworkers and signatory contractors to address issues of mutual concern.

The Iron Workers Union represents 130,000 workers in North America employed in construction on bridges; structural steel; ornamental, architectural, and miscellaneous metals; rebar; and in shops.

In Oregon, union ironworkers are represented by Portland Local 29 and Iron Workers Shopmen’s Local 516.

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