

GPPMA: A tool for maintenance efficiency

When facility owners make the decision to perform routine maintenance work, some will turn to union contractors to get the job done, which requires a union agreement such as the National Maintenance Agreement (NMA) or the Local Building Trades Agreement (LBTA) to be put in place. Another agreement — known as the General Presidents' Project Maintenance Agreement (GPPMA) — can also be used and, according to JJ White Inc. President Jim White IV, can allow a facility to see greater efficiencies and cost savings.

Created in 1956 by the AFL-CIO, the GPPMA is designed to provide skilled, highly trained crafts people to contractors who perform continuing supplemental maintenance work at industrial sites throughout the United States. Using a nationally negotiated collective bargaining agreement designed to provide cost savings to the owner community, the GPPMA is used throughout the country, but is more popular in the Midwest and Great Lakes regions.

According to White, the GPPMA was created to unify the 14 individual crafts of the AFL-CIO in order to provide plant maintenance services.

"The GPPMA was created to afford refineries, power plants and major industrial complexes the ability to perform their plant maintenance on a consistent basis," White said.

During the 2006 NPRA Reliability & Maintenance Conference, White presented on this topic and said that with the GPPMA, contractors and unions have recognized the necessity for eliminating restrictions and promoting efficiency. They agree that no rules, customs or practices shall be permitted that limit production or increase the time required to do the work, and no limitation shall be placed upon the amount of work an employee shall perform, nor shall there be any restrictions against the use of any kinds of machinery, tools or labor-saving devices.

Benefits of the GPPMA

According to White, there are several advantages that the GPPMA provides to owners and contractors, including:

- Wages, hours and working conditions are stabilized for all craft unions. In addition, there is a standard starting and quitting time for all craft workers at the facility.

- A no-strike clause, which states that if a labor agreement expires during the middle of a project maintenance agreement, the work will not stop as a result of a new contract not being reached.

- "If a union contract expires in the course of a union shutdown or a power plant outage, the facility will not lose its source of manpower," White explained.

- Standardized holidays for all craft workers on a jobsite. According to White, the GPPMA has seven consistent holidays that owners can plan their maintenance

work around.

"With 14 different crafts, sometimes you can have 14 different versions of which holidays apply," White said. "This way, owners know how to run their facilities.

"It is possible, however, that if someone knows far enough in advance about turn-arounds or outages, they can try to change those holidays around or substitute them."

- Reporting pay is the same for all unions. On some union agreements, it is required that if a worker walks through the gate, the owner owes him for a full day of work, White explained. The GPPMA, however, says that you only owe a worker two hours of wages for showing up.

- Supervision and management formulas to determine the number of workers and foremen required to supervise certain projects and work activities do not govern under the GPPMA.

"Over the years," White explained, "local agreements have mandated that a certain minimum number of men had to perform a certain project. The GPPMA says that we should man the project in accordance with the project needs."

- Local union contract terms and conditions do not apply. According to White, this is a big deal since some owners might not understand the union contracts or don't have the time to read each of the contracts for the 14 different trades.

"But all of them can get a copy of the GPPMA and all of its subsequent addenda," he said. "And that means that you have one consistent document governing all 14 individual crafts on a worksite."

- Under emergency conditions any work can be performed without regard to craft jurisdiction.

"If that union can't provide the manpower to do that work, then the contractor — on behalf of the union — has the ability to assign the work and call in the craft," White said.

- The contractor has the ability to move personnel between jobs without obtaining permission from the union. Contractors can also move operating engineers as many times as needed during the course of the day onto a different site or a different piece of equipment.

During the NPRA presentation, White pointed out that when compared to the NMA, the GPPMA can save a facility between \$6 and \$8 an hour. Some of the cost-saving benefits of the GPPMA include:

- Overtime premium for workers is greatly reduced. In many union agreements, the premium differential for working overtime is 25-50 percent. The GPPMA states that if a worker has established a shift agreement after three days, then just the shift money has to be paid, and no overtime will be paid for working the second and third shift.

- If workers do work overtime, they will

be paid time-and-a-half Monday through Saturday and double time for Sundays and holidays. However, not all workers will receive overtime pay on holidays. Operating engineers running the equipment and teamsters will not get holiday pay, which can establish a cost savings for the owner.

- Workers will not be paid for miles traveled or for food and lodging.

- The role of a master mechanic is eliminated, saving an owner approximately \$150,000 a year on a plant maintenance person. In addition, according to White, the GPPMA eliminates stewards from each of the individual craft unions. Instead, one jobsite representative will be available to respond to the owner's needs, allowing the facility to generate a cost savings of 7-8 percent.

- Wage premiums that have traditionally been associated with work and hazardous environments are eliminated.

- The local union contractor will determine and dictate the wage package associated with that local union and contractor. Everything else will be specific to the GPPMA, White said.

Unique factors of the GPPMA

In addition to the advantages stated above, the GPPMA has several unique factors not seen in other union agreements. One unique factor to the GPPMA is that the owner has to make a commitment to obligate himself to have at least one craft worker remain on site for one year so he can be in a position to respond to the owner's needs.

The GPPMA can also be carried over state lines, White said. Contractors working in one state can take the GPPMA across state lines to another jobsite.

In addition, White said that the GPPMA has grown to become an agreement that can be granted to a specific site, whereas before, the agreement was only granted to an individual contractor.

Getting the GPPMA at your facility

There are two approaches an owner can take to obtain the GPPMA — sitewide or contractor specific. In order for a facility to get the GPPMA, an owner has to request the agreement either by generating a letter to the contractor stating that they would like to perform their site maintenance under the terms of the GPPMA or by contacting the administrator of the GPPMA.

In exchange for granti-

ng the GPPMA to a project worksite or to a plant or facility, the building trades unions and the GPPMA committee have traditionally asked that the owner make a commitment that they will perform their maintenance and construction work with workers from the 14 building trades.

Creating efficiencies at a facility

Collaboration between owner, contractor and building trades through an enabler such as the GPPMA has allowed some facilities to see an improvement in efficiency. A New Jersey refinery has used this agreement and discussed its effect during the 2006 NPRA Reliability & Maintenance Conference.

According to the maintenance director at the refinery, the GPPMA allowed for the stability of the work force on site. The refinery also saw an approximately 10 percent lower use of manpower for job execution, which resulted in a cost reduction of approximately 5 percent. The maintenance director also noted that during high-need periods, the integration of job crews was beneficial.

White added that the GPPMA eliminates any inefficient practices that have crept into union agreements over the years.

"[The GPPMA] helps the facility become more efficient because it keeps a base crew of multiple crafts and disciplines on site, affording them the ability to become familiar with the plant and with the best practices, which allows them to be in a position to work safer and to work more effectively with that specific owner," White said. "And it gives the owner, by virtue of the contractor, the ability to decide how many men work on a certain project, how much supervision is needed and when to supervise a certain project. And that is big money." □

