

Bridge and Tunnel Officers Benevolent Association



Newsletter

March 2012



*Bridge and
Tunnel
Officers
Benevolent
Association*

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First Vice President
Treasurer

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BTO's Off-Duty Heroics Honored by Bklyn Beep

Last April, Bridge and Tunnel Officer Anthony Presley thought it was just another quiet Saturday night when he went to an auto repair shop in Bedford-Stuyvesant with a friend who was having his car serviced. But when a pair of armed men wearing ski masks barged through the front door – followed seconds later by two accomplices – the off-duty, 9-year veteran of the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel knew he had to take action to protect the safety of the shop's owner, another customer and his friend.

Presley foiled the armed robbery on that April 16, 2011 night, but not before taking a bullet wound to the shoulder that required emergency surgery. Two of the assailants were also wounded in the close-range gunfire. Nearly 10 months later, Presley was lauded for his heroic actions by the Brooklyn Borough President.

At the State of the Borough Address at Brooklyn College, Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz singled out Presley, who was among a group of local residents praised for their heroic deeds.

"I'm happy to report that Anthony has healed up nicely, is back on duty, and we are thrilled to acknowledge this Brooklyn hero here tonight," Markowitz said.

"Let's just say they [two of the robbers who were shot] won't be robbing anyone anytime soon," he added.

"It is gratifying to see community recognition for BTO Presley. We are grateful to Borough President Markowitz for acknowledging that Officer Presley's actions were above and beyond the call of duty," said BTOBA President Wayne Joseph.

The incident began around 8:30 p.m. at DSG Auto Repair on Albany Avenue in Bedford-Stuyvesant. Brandishing weapons, two masked thugs entered the shop and announced a hold-up. Two additional assailants entered right behind them. The pack of robbers ordered Presley, his friend, another customer and the shop's owner to move to the rear of the facility.

A quick-thinking Presley veered off course to create separation from the rest of the group. The armed robber walking behind him ordered Presley to follow the group, and when he refused, the assailant ordered him to lie face down on the floor. When Presley identified himself as an officer, the assailant began searching him for a weapon and called out to

his accomplices that Presley was a cop.

Before he knew it, all of the assailants were pouncing on him. With blood flowing from a gash in his forehead and feeling as though he was losing consciousness, Presley heard gunshots. He didn't realize he had been struck in the shoulder and in a reactionary move, returned fire with his own revolver. Two of the assailants fled. When the smoke cleared, the other two assailants had been shot.

Presley received a hero's welcome from friends and family, but he insisted that he didn't feel like he did anything heroic.

"I did what anyone in my position would have done under the circumstances. I am just happy that no one was injured and that I am still here to talk about it," the father of three said.

This isn't the first time Presley played the hero. When he was off duty in the Canarsie section of Brooklyn, he saw a motorcycle that fit the description of a friend's stolen bike. When he approached the motorcycle to get a closer look, the assailant who stole the bike began firing shots at him. Presley returned fire. The assailant was arrested and the stolen motorcycle was recovered.



Bridge and Tunnel Officer Anthony Presley (left) was among a group of Brooklyn residents hailed by Brooklyn Borough President Marty Markowitz (right) for their heroic deeds above and beyond the call of duty. BTO Presley was a guest at the Borough President's "State of the Brooklyn Address" at Brooklyn College, where this photo was taken. The Borough President praised BTO Presley for foiling an armed robbery while off duty last April at an auto repair shop in Bedford-Stuyvesant.



Members of the newly elected BTOBA Executive Board take the oath of office during a ceremony at the Union office. Taking the oath were (l.-r.) Scott Denley, Research and Negotiations Chairman; Ed Kalanz, Second Vice President/Legislative Director; Bryan Walsh, Grievance Chairman; Tom Duffy, Welfare and Benefits Administrator; Darnell Eason, Chief Health and Safety Officer; Thomas Bertuccio, Alternate Health and Safety Officer; Kevin Heltzer, First Vice President/Treasurer, and Wayne Joseph, President. Pictured far right is BTOBA Attorney Stuart Salles, who officiated at the ceremony.

FROM THE PRESIDENT'S DESK

Financial Crisis at MTAB&T?



Not with an \$800 Million Surplus; We Just Want Our Fair Share

by Wayne Joseph
BTOBA President

The two greatest challenges facing us as a union are defining our jobs in the face of electronic tolling, and negotiating a collective bargaining agreement that compensates us for the services we provide.

We have already begun meetings with MTAB&T and will have discussions on the future of our jobs in the context of the many changes taking place at our facilities. But negotiating a new contract is clearly our top priority. Everyone is familiar with the "financial crunch" at MTAB&T. We have witnessed the impact of this so-called financial crisis in staffing reductions, elimination of certain security posts, and overall deterring of law enforcement activity.

It is our position that there should never be a financial crisis at MTAB&T. The security and law enforcement services that we provide should never be eliminated because of financial constraints. Our position is bolstered by one simple fact, We are a cash cow. The money we generate is given to the MTA to meet the parent agency's financial struggles.

The money we generate creates a surplus, so how can MTAB&T have financial difficulties? There shouldn't be a surplus until our own house is made whole – in other words, until MTAB&T takes care of its own needs.

Of course, as we all know, our employer doesn't have control over its own funds. The MTA calls the shots. But isn't it time that elected officials, particularly Albany legislators, examine the way business is conducted at the MTA and MTAB&T? There should be no elimination of security posts or curtailment of law enforcement duties due to budget constraints, when they are turning over a surplus to the MTA – not in the times we live in with terrorism a constant threat.

This surplus is generated on every BTO's back. It's our blood and sweat. It is our efforts funding the MTA. Then we're told: Sorry, tough economic times. Financial crisis. No money for BTOs.

The reality is, we are not being taken care of, we aren't being compensated for the services we provide in relation to the money we generate for the MTA. If MTAB&T were in a financial crisis, the agency wouldn't have had an \$843 million surplus in 2010 to hand over to the MTA. That doesn't sound like financially tough times to us.

A surplus in the true sense of the word, as it pertains to us, means excess funds. You can't have a surplus until you are able to meet all of your financial needs. That's not happening at MTAB&T, and it's impacting our livelihood. Maybe it's time for sweeping reform in the public authorities law so we can get our fair share.

We need to be made whole before MTAB&T can generate and distribute a surplus. The current law prescribes how the surplus is distributed. We aren't disputing that, and frankly, we don't care where the money goes, as long as our agency is made whole first and we get what we deserve.

We are tired of having our pockets picked on the premise of a so-called financial crisis when we are helping to generate hundreds of millions of dollars in surplus. MTAB&T is not in crisis.

Let's switch gears and turn the discussion to communication. If someone asked you to participate in a game, you probably wouldn't do very well if no one explained the rules. It really isn't much different in the workplace.

In talking to Bridge and Tunnel Officers, we are finding that many don't fully understand policies and procedures, or are unfamiliar with their contractual rights – things as basic as when they should file a grievance or submit a Green Sheet.

Not having a working knowledge of contractual rights and, equally important, not having an understanding of policies and procedures, is often the prime cause of BTOs getting jammed up on the job. If you don't know the rules and regulations, if you don't know what's expected of you, if you don't know how management should be treating you, how can you perform what's required of you – or how can you avoid being taken advantage of?

BTOs are often brought up on charges because they are not familiar with the contract. For example, you have to submit an absence report for every absence. The lack of knowledge about this simple requirement has resulted in charges being levied against some of our Members.

Things are about to change. We are going to attempt to level the playing field against management. In the near future the BTOBA will be conducting educational workshops for Members and Delegates that will bring everyone up to speed on contractual rights and entitlements, workplace safety and health standards, and MTAB&T policies and procedures.

BTOs should not have to be at OATH for procedural issues. Members shouldn't have charges levied against them for something as simple as an absence report (Green Sheet) – and the failure to file one.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the way, there has been a disconnect between the Membership and the information they should be receiving. We plan to increase our efforts to keep Members informed about things such as procedural issues and daily operations.

It's about better communication and disseminating information – and it will start with these workshops, which will be informative and educational, offering detailed explanation and review of policies and procedures and contractual entitlements so that we can prevent problems from occurring in the first place. We will help Members achieve a better understanding of the contract by explaining different clauses, for example, overtime, sick time, time and leave, etc.

We will also address an important issue – "in-house" rules. These are rules that are contrary not only to our contractual agreement, but also to the agency's own policies. These in-house rules have been in existence for so long that BTOs have come to accept them as formal policy – again, because of a lack of communication. Our Union workshops will distinguish between actual contractual rules and agency policy, and in-house rules.

Preventing things from happening on the front end is a lot easier than having to resolve an issue on the back end. Information and knowledge are effective resources in helping the Membership make informed decisions and keeping you from getting into difficult situations. We encourage all Members to take advantage of this opportunity and attend as many workshops as possible. Notices of these workshops (date, time and location) will be posted and distributed in the weeks ahead.

We are also implementing special training workshops for Delegates so that we, as a Union, can provide the most effective representation and services to the Membership.

Another integral part of the communication and education process will be the new Union Web site, which will soon be operational. It will be an informational hub for Members, who will have their own personal username, password and E-mail address. This will allow the Union to send E-mail blasts so that all Members will receive information at the same time, and thus eliminate the potential for rumors and gossip.

The Web site will contain a calendar that shows labor-management meetings, bargaining sessions, grievance hearings, arbitration dates, general membership meetings, Delegates meetings, Safety meetings, workshops and seminars.

The membership will have input on the Union's contract proposals and will be made aware of givebacks that MTAB&T is seeking, instead of seeing them for the first time at a ratification meeting.

We look forward to your support and cooperation in carrying out our priority of communication and working together. It's time to put aside our differences and work for the common good of our Union.

As President, Wayne Joseph is the BTOBA's Chief Negotiator in the collective bargaining process. He is responsible for the Union's daily overall operations and is involved in all aspects of labor-management issues, including grievances and arbitrations, health and safety and other concerns.



Members of the BTOBA Executive Board (l.-r.) Bryan Walsh, Grievance Chairman; Scott Denley, Research & Negotiations Chairman; Kevin Heltzer, First Vice President/Treasurer; Edward Kalanz, Second Vice President/Legislative Director; Stuart Salles, Attorney at Law; Thomas Duffy, Welfare & Benefits Administrator; Wayne Joseph, President; Thomas Bertuccio, Alternate Health & Safety Officer; Darnell Eason, Chief Health & Safety Officer; & Patricia McDonnell, Office Manager.

FROM THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT/ TREASURER'S DESK



Contract, Communication & Change

by Kevin Heltzer
BTOBA First Vice President /
Treasurer

The agenda of the BTOBA's new administration can be summed up in three words: contract, communication and change.

We are immediately faced with the challenge of negotiating a new contract, as BTOBA members have been working without a new collective bargaining agreement since 2009. After a new contract is negotiated, we will be returning to the bargaining table because the new pact would expire on May 17, 2012.

Upon taking office, the new Executive Board began the important process of establishing a mutual working relationship with management. We have already met with management officials and are planning to schedule additional meetings and negotiating sessions.

Unity is essential to the successful operation of any labor union, but it is especially important during contract negotiations. All Officers of the new Executive Board are committed to working in partnership with one another and the membership. But we need the support of all BTOBA Members. We will fight for you and your families, but you must meet your obligations as a Union Member by exercising the most basic responsibility – getting involved.

There will be many opportunities for Member involvement and expression of Union pride as we launch an unprecedented, all-encompassing communications initiative that will feature:

- increased visibility and accessibility to Union Officers, including regular visits to facilities.
- eight membership meetings annually.
- a new interactive Web site that will enable Members to access and download health and benefits forms, updates on grievance and arbitration cases, job-related policies and procedures, Union-sponsored services and events, and other important information.
- educational and informational workshops for all BTOBA Members on such topics as the collective bargaining agreement, MTA Bridges and Tunnels policies and procedures, and the grievance filing process.
- E-mail blasts, robo-calls and other electronic methods of distributing timely information.

This initiative will place the Union on the fast track to expanding and improving internal communications. In addition to enhancing accessibility between Members and Executive Board Officers, meetings and workshops will be an opportunity for Members to become part of the labor-management process engage and become more knowledgeable about the work environment.

To help build solidarity, camaraderie and Union pride, we plan to create a virtual store on the Union Web site that will feature a line of products emblazoned with the BTOBA logo – such as coffee mugs, caps, tee-shirts, sweatshirts and other items. All sale proceeds will go to the Union's scholarship fund. This is a way that you can express support for your Union.

To date, we have raised enough money through corporate sponsorships of the Union calendar to provide the first annual 2012 BTOBA Education Scholarship Award to the deserving child of a Bridge and Tunnel Officer. We would like to expand the scholarship program and create additional programs that provide services to Members and their families. To achieve this goal, we will be planning fundraisers and Union-oriented activities.

We had a productive first meeting with facility Delegates and assured these front-line representatives that the BTOBA will provide the resources they need to more effectively defend your rights and advocate for your interests. We are planning to schedule the first general membership meeting of 2012 in February, when we will provide updates and discuss various issues, as well as respond to your questions.

Everyone knows the job is changing. Fighting this change places us at a disadvantage. It would seem more productive to find a way to make this change work for us – a way that protects our jobs, our future, and the future of our families. We will support what's best for the entire membership, always protecting your rights and interests.

Our roles changed dramatically after September 11, 2001. The law enforcement services we provide are what keep MTA Bridges and Tunnels facilities safe and secure. Without us, these facilities would be an easy target for terrorists and criminals. Just look at how many DWIs and DUIs we take off the roads.

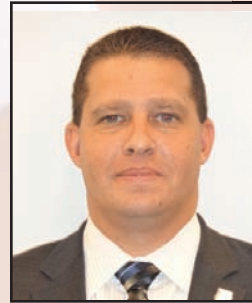
We will continue to voice our disagreement and opposition to electronic tolling. In seeking their support on this issue, we have pointed out to several State and Federal lawmakers that electronic tolling works on highways, but not on bridge and tunnel crossings – especially in this age of terrorism. Toll lanes and mechanical barriers serve as natural checkpoints. It slows down motorists before they get onto a bridge or enter a tunnel, which provides BTOs with the opportunity to observe erratic behavior. I don't know a motorist who would object to spending an extra 60 seconds or five minutes going through a toll lane if they knew it meant safe passage over a crossing.

In terms of the Union's finances, the BTOBA is fiscally solvent. We will make sure that the Union is receiving the most cost-effective, highest quality services for its expenditures.

In closing, we look forward to the challenges ahead. We look forward to working with you, and for you. Implementing new technology that brings our Union into the 21st century will greatly benefit all Members. Remember, communication and unity are key. Our success will be unlimited if we stay united and keep open the lines of communication. We all must stand up for each other.

As First Vice President/Treasurer, Kevin Heltzer is one of the chief members of the BTOBA contract negotiations team. He is responsible for the Union's daily overall operations and financial business, and he is involved in all aspects of labor-management issues including grievances and arbitrations.

FROM THE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT/ LEGISLATIVE DIRECTOR'S DESK



“Stop and Frisk” Bill 2012

Legislative Session Will Be Active for BTOBA

by Edward Kalanz
BTOBA Second Vice President / Legislative Director

The current legislative session in Albany will be an active one for the BTOBA. We will be working on a number of bills that impact all BTOs, among them:

• Stop and Frisk (S00646 in the Senate, A4304 in the Assembly) – This bill, which we were able to get passed unanimously in the Senate during the 2009-2010 legislative session. It would give Bridge and Tunnel Officers the right to stop, question and frisk someone solely on the basis of suspicion. This is an important tool that we need as BTOs by virtue of the nature of the law enforcement duties we perform at bridges and tunnels. Particularly with terrorism a continuous threat – and with our bridges and tunnels considered potential prime terrorist targets – we need the authority to stop and frisk someone just on the premise of suspicion.

We will be lobbying heavily for this bill in both houses of the State Legislature. Even though it passed unanimously in the Senate during the 2010 legislative session, we cannot assume it will automatically pass again in this session and will, therefore, be meeting with supporters in the Senate and Assembly.

Our lobbying message to members of the Senate and Assembly is clear: The bridges and tunnels are natural checkpoints. When we observe someone suspicious seeking entry to one of our tunnels or bridges – which serve as critical crossing into Manhattan and the other boroughs – we should have the ability to stop, question and search an individual.

September 11, 2001 changed everything. The Stop and Frisk bill would enhance the safety and security of the public and these bridge and tunnel crossings that are vital to New York City.

• Binding Arbitration Bill (A07935 in the Assembly) – We were able to get this bill back on the Assembly calendar on the first day of the 2012 legislative session.

As it currently stands, when we have gone into arbitration on contractual issues in the past, arbitration panels did not factor into their decisions our peace officer training. In other words, they didn't factor in our training in use of firearms and batons, making arrests or any other peace officer training that we undergo. As a result, they render their decisions based on the TWU pattern.

This bill would require arbitration panels to factor in our peace officer training when rendering their decisions on contract-related arbitration cases.

• **Police Bill** – This bill, which would give police status to Bridge and Tunnel Officers, is currently in the drafting stage. We are working closely with other police unions in re-drafting this bill. No one debates that we perform police duties, and that our law enforcement role and responsibilities have increased substantially since Sept. 11, 2001. But to bolster our lobbying effort for police status, we point to our arrest rate and conviction rate – both of which have received high praise from local district attorneys and others in the justice system. We plan to submit this bill during the current legislative session. We have been meeting with a number of elected officials on issues of public safety at our bridge and tunnel facilities. In meetings with top staff of U.S. Representative Peter King, who also serves as Chairman of U.S. Homeland Security, we have outlined the drastic reductions in security that MTA Bridges and Tunnels has implemented, and the dangers they pose to public safety.

I have also met with U.S. Representative Robert Turner to discuss the serious deficiencies in security at our bridges and tunnels and potential terrorist threats that loom as a result of these deficiencies.

In addition, we have met with Queens Assemblyman Rory Lanceman, who is the Chairman of the Assembly's Safety Committee, to discuss health and safety issues that impact BTOs in the workplace.

We will continue to voice our issues and concerns to those elected officials who support and understand the importance of our work in keeping bridge and tunnel crossings safe and secure. We will provide updates on these and other lobbying efforts that we pursue in Albany and Washington.

As Second Vice President/Legislative Director, Ed Kalanz is the chief lobbyist for the BTOBA. He spends much of his time in Albany advocating for legislation that addresses a variety of workplace and safety issues for Bridge and Tunnel Officers. In addition to meeting with and articulating important issues to members of the New York State Senate and Assembly, as well as the Governor's staff and other statewide officials, he meets with Federal lawmakers to lobby for support for safety and security at MTA Bridges and Tunnels.

RESEARCH & NEGOTIATIONS CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Change Is In The Air, But We Will Persevere

by Scott Denley
BTOBA Research and Negotiations
Chairman

As someone newly elected to the BTOBA Executive Board, I am excited and optimistic about the team that you, the membership, has put in place to lead our Union now and into the future. We are an energized group with many ideas and initiatives that are aimed at improving services for all Members. Arriving fresh from the front lines, I bring a unique perspective and look forward to working as a team with fellow Board Members in meeting the challenges that face our Union in the months ahead. One of the biggest challenges is change.

Change in our workplace is evident at every turn. Yet management is not very forthcoming with their plans for the future and how we, as BTOs, fit into these plans.

The road surely will be a bumpy one, but I am confident that by keeping open the lines of communication with Members, as well as with management, we will be able to preserve and improve our jobs – and we will keep the membership fully informed of new developments and how these changes affect you. Change is in the air, but we will persevere through honesty and communication.

Clearly, another of our biggest challenges will be to reverse management's negative, adversarial mindset. They must begin to understand the value that BTOs bring to the table.

Rest assured that open communication will be a big part of this Executive Board. Internally, the membership will have greater access to information – such as the contract, rules and regulations, and other related materials. This will educate members and keep everyone updated on new developments. Most of all, it will help them understand what is expected on the job – and conversely, help them realize when their rights are being violated. Members will also see a high level of accountability from BTOBA Officers – and rightly so because the membership has demonstrated confidence in the Executive Board to represent their interests and the needs of their family. There is a flip side to this equation. As a BTOBA Member, you have the responsibility to be active participants in our Union – your Union. You have to take the initiative to become involved and take advantage of the educational opportunities and information made available to you. Together, we will face and conquer the challenges that await us. If all of us meet our responsibilities as individual Union Officers and Union Members, collectively we will succeed.

As Research and Negotiations Chairman, Scott Denley plays a major role in preparing the Union for its monthly labor-management meetings – which includes establishing meetings dates, creating the agenda and identifying issues that will be discussed. He also works closely with Grievance Chairman Bryan Walsh on facility grievances and assists other Executive Board Members in preparing arbitrations and OATH hearings.

GRIEVANCE CHAIRMAN'S REPORT



Overhaul of Grievance Process Translates Into Improved Member Representation

by Bryan Walsh, BTOBA Grievance Chairman

The grievance and arbitration process is the most powerful resource we have when it comes to protecting our contractual and other workplace rights. In the weeks ahead we are implementing a sweeping new process in the way grievances and arbitrations are filed to better serve all BTOBA Members.

Highlights of this new filing process include:

- Training workshops for all facility Delegates and Alternate Delegates.
- Implementation of a standardized grievance form.
- Electronic grievance filing.
- Digital record keeping of grievances and arbitrations.

We are eliminating the antiquated process of hand-written grievances. Grievances will now be filed electronically, which will enable us to maintain a digital file history of all grievances and arbitrations. This database will give us the ability to access information for reference and background purposes as we prepare for cases. A standardized grievance template will be available for download on the soon-to-be unveiled new BTOBA Web site. Using a uniform and streamlined format will ensure that facts and information necessary to bolster a case are contained in every grievance.

Delegates will provide grievances to Union officials before submitting them to the facility supervisor. We will work closely with Delegates at the facility level, maintaining hands-on involvement with each individual grievance – from the time it is generated to the actual hearing.

A thorough review and administrative coordination not only insures presentation of a grievance in the strongest possible manner, it enables us to determine whether a grievance could be an issue that impacts the entire membership or other facilities. It could also help us determine whether an issue could be resolved before it is filed as a grievance.

One of the most important initiatives in the new filing process is a series of educational workshops for Delegates and Alternate Delegates. These workshops are aimed at educating front-line Union representatives in all contractual terms and conditions so they have a better understanding of when a contract violation has occurred and when a grievance should be generated. These workshops will also provide training on how to file a grievance. A better-educated Union representative translates into a better-served Union membership.

As a reminder to all BTOBA Members, contact your Delegate if you feel a contract violation has occurred. Err on the side of caution and protect your self. Don't assume anything. Let your Union representative determine

whether your rights have been violated. While the majority of grievances generally relate to contractual issues, many also involve safety matters. While we encourage you to make every effort to follow Union protocol by contacting your Delegate at the facility level, Union Officers are always available to discuss an issue or potential grievance.

As Grievance Chairman, Bryan Walsh files grievances, schedules grievance hearings, maintains grievance and arbitration records, and assists in the preparation and writing of facility grievances as well as grievances that impact the entire membership. Once the grievance procedure has been exhausted, he is also partially responsible for preparing and presenting arbitration cases.

WELFARE AND BENEFITS ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT



New Year Brings Improvements With More On The Horizon

by Thomas Duffy
BTOBA Welfare & Benefits Chairman

As part of ongoing efforts to contain costs while expanding benefits for active and retired Members under the Union-provided benefits program, a number of additions and improvements have become effective as of January 1, 2012:

- EpiPens are now covered under our prescription drug plan for active and retired Members. This is an important addition to our prescription plan because many BTOs and their family members require EpiPens (Epinephrine Auto-Injectors) in allergic emergencies. EpiPens, which treat a variety of severe allergic reactions, are only available by prescription in the U.S.
- Life insurance for active Members has been increased to \$50,000 (from \$30,000).
- The accidental death and dismemberment policy for active Members also has been raised from \$30,000 to \$50,000.
- Short-term disability payments have been increased to \$300 per week (from \$200) for active Members. This increase does not apply to existing claims, but only on claims arising from Jan. 1, 2012 forward.

We are always looking for ways to reduce costs so that we can put the savings back into the program in the form of expanded and improved benefits such as those outlined here. We anticipate more improvements on the horizon as a result of renegotiating contracts with office supply companies that has resulted in an overall reduction in operating overhead. We have also improved the Medicare reimbursement rate for retired Members with the new prescription drug provider.

Later this year, on July 1st – when the new fiscal year begins for our prescription drug plan – the annual deductible for active Members will be reduced to zero and the annual deductible for retired Members will be reduced to \$75.

It is always a challenge – but particularly in these difficult economic times – to maintain the level of benefits that BTOs have grown accustomed to. We will continue to identify ways to reduce costs and translate these savings into increased benefits for Members.

Members should contact me with questions about Union-provided benefits, or with problems you may be having with a provider. As someone who has been on the job for 22 years, do not hesitate to contact me about any other issue. If we are going to be successful in resolving issues and problems, communication between Members and all Union Officers is vital.

As Welfare and Benefits Administrator, Tom Duffy administers and coordinates day-to-day operation of the Union-provided benefits program for active and retired Members. This includes prescription drug, eyeglass, dental, life insurance, disability insurance and prepaid legal benefits. (Medical benefits are provided by MTA Bridges and Tunnels and, therefore, do not fall under the Union-provided program.) He meets with representatives of vendors and suppliers to obtain the most cost-effective benefits without sacrificing quality, and serves as a liaison for Members with these providers. As an Executive Board Member, he also attends labor-management meetings, assists in grievance preparation and testifies at arbitration hearings

CHIEF HEALTH AND SAFETY OFFICERS'S REPORT



Priority #1: Safest Possible Work Environment For All BTO's

by Darnell Eason
BTOBA Health and Safety Officer

One of my first priorities as newly appointed Chief Health and Safety Officer is to organize quarterly group meetings with all facility Safety Officers and Alternate Safety Officers.

When it comes to the safety, health and well being of BTOs, communication is key – and that's exactly what these meetings will provide: an opportunity for front-line safety representatives to discuss issues, share information and develop strategies aimed at insuring the safest possible work environments for all BTOBA Members.

In addition to maintaining a pulse on safety concerns across the system, sharing information on a regular basis enables us to red-flag issues that may not necessarily be limited to a specific facility, but could be a more widespread problem.

Asbestos is always our top health and safety concern at all facilities – which is why I will be attending a comprehensive safety-training course sponsored by the Big Apple Occupational Safety Corp. that will focus specifically on asbestos.

The course includes intensive training in all asbestos and asbestos abatement laws, regulations and safety measures. At the end of the weeklong course, which includes sessions totaling eight hours a day, I will receive a Department of Labor "Asbestos Project Monitor" License.

This will allow me to monitor all asbestos abatement projects performed at our facilities. When MTA Bridges and Tunnels announces plans for an asbestos abatement project, I will attend meetings and review the plan and procedures that the agency has in place. I would make certain that these procedures follow OSHA and other regulations and laws, and would raise issues and concerns where I believe the health and safety of BTOBA Members is being jeopardized. In addition, I would monitor the project as it is progressing, and at the conclusion of the job I would do a site inspection to insure that it is completed in accordance with all laws and regulations.

Another safety issue we will address is the increasing number of potholes on toll plazas. With BTOs constantly patrolling and performing other duties on foot at toll plazas, it is important to our health and well being that the pavement is repaired. It's easy to twist an ankle or sprain a knee – or even worse, tear a ligament – when we are dodging potholes as we move around the plaza tending to motorists with invalid EZ-Pass tags and non-tag holders in EZ-Pass lanes, or effecting car stops for various VTL violations as well as other violations of the law.

If you have a safety and health concern or issue, follow protocol by notifying your supervisory officer and your Union Safety Officer or Alternate Safety Officer – who, in turn, will bring it to my attention. Of course, you can always contact me directly, or any other Executive Board Officer. But it's best to address it initially at the facility level.

As Chief Health & Safety Officer, Darnell Eason is responsible for addressing safety and health-related issues, concerns and problems at all bridge and tunnel facilities. He works closely with all facility Safety Officers and Alternate Safety Officers. As a 17-year member of the Uniondale Volunteer Fire Department in Nassau County, where he has served in many positions including Fire Chief, he has undergone numerous types of certification training courses.