

Pulp truth

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Please copy Pulp Truth front and back and distribute it during non-work time using your Communications and Action Teams, steward system or Rapid Response network. Be sure to leave copies in lunchrooms, break rooms, etc. We want to hear what's happening in your workplace. Send your news to lbaker@usw.org

Pulp Truth To Be Published Weekly for Up-to-Date News, Information

Solidarity is created when everyone is informed, understands what needs to be done and is involved in the bargaining process. *Pulp Truth* is a tool that can help us build and grow our union.

To that end, we are publishing our newsletter once a week beginning Aug. 8 to give us the most timely, up-to-date news and information about our union and our industry. Each newsletter will be one page so that it is easier to

copy and distribute to members.

Handing out *Pulp Truth* gives you the opportunity to engage more members in building our union. The newsletter will also be available at our website, www.usw.org/paperworkers.

Share news about what your local is doing by sending it to *Pulp Truth* editor, Lynne Baker, at lbaker@usw.org.

Georgia-Pacific Mill Workers Ratify Master Economic Agreement

After almost a year of planning, preliminary meetings and then formal negotiations, USW members from 13 mills ratified by a 3 to 1 margin in July a Master Economic Agreement with Georgia-Pacific (GP).

The four-year agreement establishes the economic pattern for the upcoming bargaining cycle and covers contracts with scheduled expiration dates from Jan. 1, 2011 through Dec. 31, 2014.

Built upon the first master agreement negotiated four years ago, the new pattern reflects the bargaining goals established by local union representatives during preliminary meetings and moves bargaining forward. Local union representatives from each mill local also participated in discussions at the bargaining table. Their approval was necessary to bring the company's offer to the membership for a vote.

This process circumvents what used to happen in bargaining: Site-by-site negotiations, with the company establishing the economic pattern early in the bargaining cycle and solidifying it by mid-cycle. The result was that workers had a limited voice to influence the bargaining and the company imposed its own agenda.

Improvements Made

The Master Economic Agreement—which covers some 5,100 workers—provides wage improvements in each year of the contract. Wages increase 2% the first year, 1% the second year, 2% in the third year and 1% in the fourth year. This is the first time in 10 years there have been annual wage increases for each year of the master and they come at a time when wages are stagnant for most Americans. Issues regarding specific classifications and

rates of pay will be negotiated at the local level.

Despite the uncertainty regarding the health care market, the agreement locks in key features and cost sharing mechanisms in the health care plan for five to seven years depending on when local agreements expire. Medical inflation is kept in check; a cap on dependent premiums keeps the cost down for large families; and dental benefits are improved.

At a time when many companies are unloading their defined benefit pension plans, the master agreement makes improvements to the defined benefit plan, provides a path to stability for those participating in the PIUMPH plan and standardizes 401(k) benefits.

A high level health and safety committee with rank-and-file participation was established in the agreement to discuss possible ways to improve mill health and safety performance.

Locals that did not have successorship (job and contract protection) language have it now under the new master agreement. This helps protect workers at a time when the paper industry is restructuring itself.

The agreement also provides a path and process for the parties to use locally to negotiate over certain local conditions not covered by the economic master.

Connect with USW Paper Sector

Email: papersafety@usw.org, uswpaper@usw.org

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