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CLOSED Circuit

WESTERN AREA POWER ADMINISTRATION OCTOBER 2021

Change, transitions and actions

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LeBeau appointed WAPA administrator

In August, Secretary of Energy Jennifer Granholm named **Tracey LeBeau** the new administrator and CEO of Western Area Power Administration. LeBeau had been acting in the position since March, and her appointment became effective Aug. 29.

"It is an honor to be selected for such a prestigious position and to lead nearly 2,000 amazing employees and contractors at WAPA who serve like your lights depend on it," LeBeau said in an email to employees. "We have many unique opportunities and challenges facing WAPA and the energy industry in the West, and I'm excited to collaborate with customers and other stakeholders to chart a journey toward an enduring and successful future for WAPA, our critical mission, our customers and the more than 40 million Americans they serve."

She is the first woman and, as a member of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, the first Native American to lead WAPA.

Granholm provided a brief recorded message of congratulations to be played at a special All-Employee Meeting on Sept. 8.

"Since the day that you stepped into the interim administrator role, you have provided WAPA with steady and capable guidance," she said in the video. "You have demonstrated the vision, the dedication, the expertise that this team needs in a leader, and I think you've won the confidence of your colleagues and certainly of the DOE leadership team. Dropping interim from your title was really one of the easiest decisions I've had to make as Secretary of Energy."

Deft management of transition

LeBeau joined the Department of Energy in 2011 as a political appointee in the Obama Administration. Prior to this, she was a principal at Dentons, an international law firm, and served in executive capacities in a variety of energy sectors, including energy marketing, interstate pipeline and energy consultancy businesses.

She joined WAPA in 2014 as the organization's Transmission Infrastructure Program manager, where she oversaw the operations and management of WAPA's $3.25-billion loan program to support and finance transmission and related infrastructure.

"I am a true believer in public-private partnerships and in infrastructure," said LeBeau, reflecting on her first role at WAPA. "I believe infrastructure is so critical to community sustainability and growth. Also, TIP was a no-brainer fit, given my background in project finance, renewables and infrastructure development."

Her experience leading TIP provided LeBeau with an opportunity to showcase one of her greatest strengths to WAPA: managing transition.

"I led TIP through a few transitions," she said. "I am good at transitions. I have a track record of it, even before I came to WAPA, working in the midst of great industry transitions, through energy sector deregulations, through an emerging energy trading sector, through electric retail competition, through a renaissance of oil and gas in the western sedimentary basin and through the rise of renewables."

She went on to discuss some significant changes and challenges that are facing the industry.

"My priority now and in the next few years is to be a good steward and lead again through some transitions," she said. "Leading through transition and change will likely define my time as administrator. I will do whatever I can to clear paths, remove hurdles, champion WAPA and collaborate as much as possible."

Of the challenges faced by WAPA, LeBeau explained that there is little new or surprising among them.

"We've seen them coming," she explained, "but they are emerging in terms of intensity, and they have a bit of an existential feel to them because of their nature and how they could impact the core of what we do."

She cited examples, such as extreme weather in the form of drought, wildfires and severe fluctuations in temperature. She also addressed the rapidly changing energy marketplace.

"We are facing questions about the adequacy of the generation resources to meet peak loads across the West," said LeBeau. "Put another way, will the power be available to customers when they need it, particularly when unexpected but increasing contingencies occur? And will what we do in these markets fundamentally impact our historical roles?"

These specific questions may be unique, but WAPA's administrators have always had to make tough decisions.

"I think it's safe to say that all of our administrators have faced challenges, ranging from operational issues to shifts in markets or prices to national priorities," she said. "We have a lot of transition at our doorstep and more on the horizon."

Journey to WAPA

LeBeau's professional journey has been a fairly direct one.

"I didn't have a clear career path when I was growing up," she said, "but I did always gravitate toward natural resources and environment. So, as an undergrad, I took a lot of earth sciences, geology and the like, as well as petroleum engineering courses."

She also developed a strong interest in the law.

"I knew I'd be going to law school from early on," said LeBeau. "I like the structure that being law-trained provides. It's a way to make sense of the world in some respects."

She eventually specialized in environmental and international law.

"I was not sure if I would end up in the energy sector but I'm glad it worked out that way," she said.

Of course, she also developed some personal interests, outside of her professional development. LeBeau is an avid reader, often cycling through several different books at the same

> **Leading through transition and change will likely define my time as administrator.**

time. She tends to read fiction, but also enjoys non-fiction authors, such as Brené Brown.

"I'm a golfer," she said, "and my husband is a professional golf teaching pro. I'm not a great golfer because I just don't get the time to practice as much as I need, but I really enjoy getting out on the course."

Another hobby is related to the sport, but not specific to it.

"My other favorite activity is just hanging out with my husband," she said. "We are on different schedules given our professions so, when we find time, we try to stay flexible and spend time together, traveling and on the course."

Looking forward

LeBeau understands that her new role will be a challenging one, but she is also aware of how well-equipped WAPA is to weather the challenges ahead.

"Today, my vision for the organization is more people focused," she said. "My vision is focused on our organizational resilience, preparedness and the culture of the people in the organization."

She is prepared to lead WAPA through what may sometimes be difficult circumstances, and she is confident in her ability to do so.

"We have a great foundation that we have collectively built over the past few years and continue to build upon," she said. "We are curious and committed to learning. We are strategic in our approach to things, and are proven to be proactive when we can. We are data driven, and becoming more so, which will guide us to make the right decisions, about the right things, at the right times."

She also praised WAPA's commitment to the professional development of its leaders.

"We have a ground-up consensus on what leadership qualities we all want to focus on and expect from each other, and we have committed to a leadership journey," she said. "We are investing in our emerging leaders. We are maintaining our laser focus on safety and maturing it to include Just Culture and Human Performance Improvement."

LeBeau also emphasized WAPA's commitment to an inclusive and diverse workforce.

"We are acknowledging and infusing inclusion and diversity into all of our approaches to leadership and culture and the organization, not only because it's the right thing to do, but because it's the smart thing to do," she said. "Diverse organizations simply perform better. It's a proven fact."

A number with significance

In reflecting upon her appointment, LeBeau noticed an interesting coincidence.

"I didn't really realize it until some of the announcements were being drafted," she said, "but I am the seventh administrator of WAPA. It is also my seventh year at WAPA. I don't want to overdramatize it, but in many indigenous cultures, the concept of the seventh generation is prescient. It essentially means that the decisions we make today should work toward ensuring a sustainable world seven generations into the future."

The thought led her to consider even larger implications and connections.

"So much of our federal hydroelectric past and foundations, literal and figurative, is built on and in the traditional territories of so many Indian Tribes throughout the West," she said. "I am still processing this whole concept myself, and my position as seventh administrator, but I thought this was an interesting lens to share with people."

All of which brought LeBeau right back around to her strengths as a leader.

"I have an inherent mindset of deliberating change, transitions and actions by looking ahead at long-term outcomes, and I bring that to WAPA," she said. "I know our entire leadership team shares this. We are all looking ahead to the long-term well-being of the organization. I hope that gives folks some peace and assurance in the days to come."

Closed Circuit expresses its sincerest congratulations and support to WAPA's new administrator. ☐

Note: Alexander Stephens contributed to this story.

Well wishes for WAPA's seventh administrator

News of **Tracey LeBeau's** appointment was met with accolades and words of encouragement across the industry. Here is a small sampling.

So great to hear the news about your appointment! Congratulations, and good luck with all of the work before you and the rest of the WAPA team.

– Luke H. Bassett, Senior Professional Staff Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources

A sincere and smiling congratulations to you as the Administrator for the Western Area Power Administration. I know a lot of folk are especially proud for you, and please include me in that group.

– Anita Decker, Chair, Western Energy Imbalance Market

Congratulations! It is wonderful to see another woman breaking barriers in this industry.

– Melanie M. Frye, President and CEO, Western Electricity Coordinating Council

I'm excited to work with the new WAPA Administrator to confront our shared challenges and to maximize our opportunities. Congratulations Tracey LeBeau and best wishes!

– Richard Glick, Chairman, Federal Energy Regulatory Commission

So well deserved! I look forward to partnering as we take on the many challenges we face with our organizations as the industry experiences significant change.

– John Hairston, Administrator and CEO, Bonneville Power Administration

Congratulations on this appointment on a permanent basis. If you need anything from MRES, please do not hesitate to contact me. We look forward to working with you.

– Tom Heller, President and CEO, Missouri River Energy Services

Congratulations, Tracey! I look forward to working with you to advance the WAPA core mission of delivering federal hydropower to consumer-owned utilities in the West and Mid-West.

– Jim Horan, Executive Director, Mid-West Electric Consumers Association

Ms. LeBeau is an excellent choice for this important position. She has great experience in the energy area, commitment to public service, and a true understanding of the energy needs for Indian Country. I am looking forward to working with her in the weeks and months ahead.

– Stephen R. Lewis, Board of Directors Chairman, Gila River Indian Community Utility Authority

We commend Secretary Granholm and the Biden/Harris Administration on this historic appointment of an exceptionally qualified Native woman to lead and manage a key part of our national infrastructure. Tracey brings proven experience of working with a vast array of stakeholders in the energy industry, and we welcome this appointment and the opportunity to engage with someone with a deep understanding of the unique issues facing Indian Country.

– Mark Macarro, Tribal Chairman, Pechanga Band of Luiseño Indians

Hearty congratulations! Fantastic news. I wish you all the best for your tenure as WAPA CEO.

– Arun Majumdar, Jay Precourt Professor & Co-Director, Institute for Energy at Stanford University

Congratulations on this amazing opportunity as the WAPA Administrator. Best wishes for much success.

– Kimball Rasmussen, CEO, Deseret Power

Congratulations on the appointment as WAPA Administrator. Looking forward to working with you in your now permanent role!

– Jim Shetler, General Manager, Balancing Authority of Northern California

This is so well deserved! WAPA is in such great and capable hands.

– Erin Moore, Chief Human Capital Officer, Department of Energy

Many, many congrats. You have a huge job ahead, but you will be fantastic.

– Michael Skelly, CEO, Grid United

What great news this is for our organization and all the customers of our members. We look forward to working together to ensure reliable, low-cost power to the Customers of WAPA in Desert Southwest.

– Russell D. Smoldon, Executive Director, Arizona Municipal Power Users' Association

Congratulations, and best wishes in the role! I look forward to working with you in the future.

– Mike Wech, Administrator and CEO, Southwestern Power Administration ☐

WAPA welcomes White Belt training

By Aidan Wiese

The Continuous Process Improvement Program launched its newest offering, Lean Six Sigma White Belt Training, in January. Since then, 200 employees have completed the course.

Those who participated learned basic Lean and Six Sigma principles and received several tools to support improvement work within their day-to-day duties. This course also served as a refresher for those who already have their Green Belts or related training.

In the two-hour course, attendees received an overview of the five-phase approach to process improvement, learned about a few simple yet powerful tools used in each phase and received hands-on exposure to some of the tools and techniques.

The training used Visio software to keep participants engaged and to show illustrative, detailed examples of the CPI process and the methods behind it. Instructors used the software to walk through the process with attendees in real time and explain the nuances and details of the methodology while keeping attendees engaged with tools that could be worked through as a group.

By leading the group through exercises, the instructors encourage attendees to think of the process as another toolset that can be applied to anything. The program used a real-world example to highlight the process-improvement methodology: the process of baking brownies.

It was a comparison that went over well.

"I loved the example of baking brownies," said one anonymous attendee in a post-training survey. "Everyone can relate to that! It was so easy to follow."

"I really appreciated the brownies example," said another. "It really helped me to see the steps of an actual process."

This level of active engagement and real-world examples keeps

attendees focused and helps individual employees to learn to use the tools presented. It also helps them to begin thinking critically of ways to improve processes and create better efficiencies in their day-to-day tasks.

More than half of WAPA's reported $114 million in cost savings and avoidance comes from Just Do It projects. These projects are primarily led by individual employees who have identified specific ways to improve work processes and increase efficiencies in their daily work.

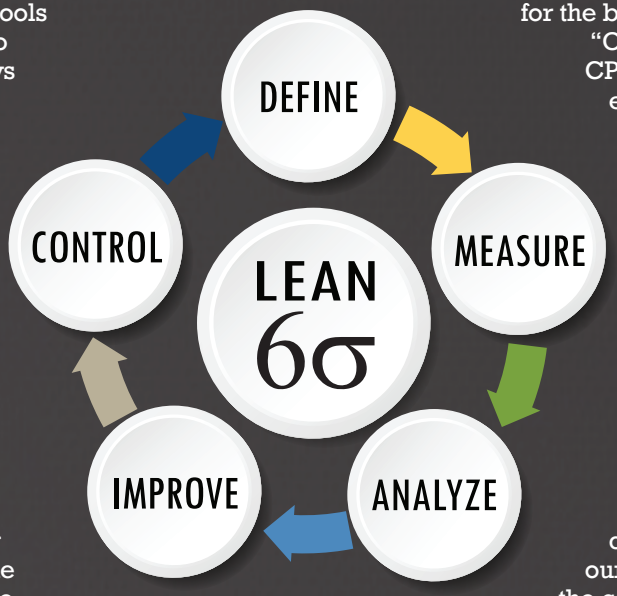
With the increasing number of White Belts across WAPA, the CPI Program hopes to see these benefits grow significantly.

The White Belt course is also a great resource for supervisors, program managers and even senior leaders. Sharing the Lean Six Sigma language and leading or supporting Just Do It projects can help remove inefficiencies and ultimately improve the productivity of team members. This all supports the CPI Program's goal of creating a culture of continuous process improvement.

The CPI Program has two Lean Six Sigma Black Belts – Lead Management and Program Analyst **Laura Dawson** and Management and Program Analyst **Renata Slayton** – who are available to answer project questions, guide employees to successful outcomes and provide process improvement training.

The CPI staff supports WAPA's 24 certified Lean Six Sigma Green Belts, 55 certified Yellow Belts and now the 200 White Belts as they lead process improvement projects and activities.

Employees at any Lean Six Sigma skill level are encouraged to leverage these resources and skills to define problems and identify quick wins that can eliminate waste in a process. The CPI Black Belt staff is available to consult on the more complex process problems to help scope the work and identify the right tools and techniques for the best outcomes.



"Our goal is to see that our CPI Program's mentality is embedded into WAPA's culture, and that's what this White Belt training did; we helped embed the mentality and the tools we use across the organization," said Dawson. "The purpose of this program is to make WAPA more efficient and effective as an organization, and we do that not by owning the entirety of the process improvement work ourselves, but by building the capability across our entire workforce."

Dawson noted that, after conducting this training, WAPA saw a significant increase in the community of practice sessions. In each of these monthly sessions, the CPI Program staff performs a deep dive into a single tool from the process improvement toolkit and discusses current improvement projects and activities.

"We're leveraging the momentum we've built by training so many people," Dawson said. "Not only does the level of participation show success at embedding the improvement mindset across WAPA, but we're taking it a step further by including them in our community of practice and hosting ongoing training and support for those attendees." ■

Note: Wiese is a secretary who works under the Miracorp contract.

To learn more about Lean Six Sigma training offerings at WAPA, contact **ldawson@wapa.gov** or **slayton@wapa.gov**

Do your part: Be cyber smart

By Debra Boothe

The line between our online and offline lives has become indistinguishable. In these tech-fueled times, our homes, societal well-being, economic prosperity and nation's security are affected by the internet.

Because of this evolution, it is more important than ever to devote some time and energy to learning about and reminding ourselves how to operate safely and securely online.

October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month. Each year, WAPA's Cyber Security team dedicates resources to sharing information, best practices and tips to help employees keep themselves, their information and WAPA's systems secure.

The theme of Cybersecurity Awareness Month 2021 is "Do Your Part. Be Cyber Smart." It focuses on empowering individuals and organizations to play their own role in protecting their area of cyberspace.

If everyone does their part, implementing stronger security practices, raising community awareness, educating vulnerable audiences or training employees, our interconnected world will be safer and more resilient for everyone.

Throughout October, we will focus on the following areas in our promotions and outreach.

Oct. 1: Kickoff

Chief Information Security Officer **Kevin Schulz** sent out a kickoff email summarizing this year's theme. It emphasized raising awareness about the importance of cybersecurity and ensuring that all individuals have the information and tools they need to be safer and more secure online.

Cyber Security will publish articles on myWAPA throughout the month that offer tips to keep you, your devices, your information and WAPA's information safe and secure. These weekly messages are adapted from the National Cybersecurity Alliance.

Week 1: Be cyber smart

As our lives have become increasingly dependent on technology, virtually all personal and business data is kept on internet-connected platforms, which can become a gold mine for bad actors.

The first week of Cybersecurity Awareness Month highlighted leading security practices and focused on cyber hygiene to keep your information safe.

Own your role in cybersecurity by starting with the basics; they are always a great place to start. Create strong passwords, use multifactor authentication, back up your data and update your software.

Week 2: Fight the phish

Phishing attacks and scams are nothing new, but it is important to note that they have thrived since the COVID-19 pandemic began in 2020. Phishing attacks account for more than 80% of reported security incidents.

Week 2 of Cybersecurity Awareness Month stressed the importance of being wary of emails, text messages and chat boxes that come from a stranger or someone you were not expecting.

Think before you click on any suspicious emails, links or attachments. Report any suspicious emails to **spam@wapa.gov**

Week 3: Explore. Experience. Share.

Week 3 of Cybersecurity Awareness Month highlights the Cybersecurity Career Awareness Week, which promotes the exploration of cybersecurity careers.

Whether it's students, veterans or those seeking a career change, the dynamic field of cybersecurity is rapidly growing and has something for everyone.

Week 4: Cybersecurity first

Week 4 is all about making security a priority.

For businesses, this means building security into products and processes, making cybersecurity training a part of employee onboarding and equipping staff with the tools they need to help keep the organization safe.

For individuals, keep cybersecurity at the forefront of your mind as you connect daily. Before purchasing a device or online product, do your research. When you set up a new device or app, consider your security and privacy settings and update default passwords. Cybersecurity should not be an afterthought.

Finally, WAPA's Information Assurance team created a Microsoft Teams channel where you can ask questions and chat with our in-house experts. Information systems security officers monitor the channel and are available to discuss cybersecurity practices or the organization's Cyber Security program.

If you haven't checked out the channel yet, be sure to do so. Open Microsoft Teams, click on "Teams" on the left-side navigation, scroll to the WAPA Forum team and select the Cybersecurity Collaboration channel. ☐

Note: Boothe is an information security technology specialist who works under the Innovative Management Concepts contract.

Meet your ISSOs

WAPA's information systems security officers use cyber tools to monitor WAPA-wide cybersecurity risks. They provide guidance to their respective regions, conduct vulnerability assessments across WAPA and respond to incidents as they arise.

- **Debra Boothe** – Sierra Nevada
- **Brad Bouchard** – Upper Great Plains
- **David Hartley** – Headquarters
- **Ron Juliana** – Desert Southwest
- **Satpal Kalsi** – Sierra Nevada
- **Kyle Quashnick** – Rocky Mountain
- **Jerry Smith** – Headquarters

New HR award recognizes strategic partnership

In August, the Power Marketing Administration Human Resources Shared Service Center launched the HR Strategic Partnership Award, an annual award for leaders who demonstrate outstanding skill in partnering with HR. The group also announced the award's inaugural recipient, Administrative Officer **Kellie Petty**.

"To provide great HR service, we need great partners," said HR Director **Cheryl Reese**. "HR is privileged to work with many dedicated leaders across three power marketing administrations. Rating criteria for this award includes broad scope and impact of decisions, positive educational influence upon other decision makers and determination to nurture a strong, results-oriented partnership for the future."

She went on to explain Petty's selection.

"Kellie has consistently proven her commitment to getting to the best answer by leveraging partnerships, understanding organizational history, listening to all viewpoints and tirelessly pushing forward to the best solution," she said. "The path to the right answer can be challenging; Kellie is a shining example of how to work strategically with HR partners on that journey."

Reese made a point of thanking Senior Vice President and Colorado River Storage Project Manager **Tim Vigil** and Senior Vice President and Rocky Mountain Regional Manager **Bart Barnhart**, Petty's supervisors, for grasping the importance of the award and enthusiastically supporting her nomination.

She explained that the award is targeted at leaders who have broad scope and impact of decisions, who exert positive educational influence upon other decision-makers and who are determined to nurture a strong, results-oriented partnership for the future.

Petty said she was honored and humbled to receive the award.

"As an administrative officer for several years with WAPA, it has given me the rare opportunity to recognize the need to need to bring our employees, leaders and HR professionals together to improve our culture, provide solutions and ensure our employees and leaders are working together in a respectful way to meet our common goals," she said.

The award ties more deeply into her professional history than many might expect, as well.

"I have spent the majority of my 38-year federal civilian career in specific HR roles," said Petty. "It has been my passion. I believe that everyone has a need, should have a voice and that constant communication is key in order for our workforce to be successful."

Reese explained that HR created the award to recognize the fact that, to be a strategic partner, HR must understand the work of the business.

"How does each department and role work and fit together?" she asked. "What does the data and evidence tell us in terms of key insights to drive the right action at the right time? HR must look at the big picture, and not be 'stuck in the weeds.' What will help our clients reach their goals now and in the future?"

Of course, HR is only half of the equation; it takes a strong leader to proactively share goals and information, helping HR to be a full partner in securing results and achieving their mission.

For her part, Petty understands the value of effective collaboration with HR.

"When we think about it, our people and their efforts are the core aspect of everything we accomplish to carry out our great mission," she explained. "There are many entities and individuals that help support our employees from an HR perspective every day. Without recognizing the human element, everyone's contribution and needs, we cannot succeed as an organization."

Moving forward, the PMA HR SSC will consider the leaders with whom they worked during the previous year, nominate their candidates and arrive at a group decision as to who should receive the award.

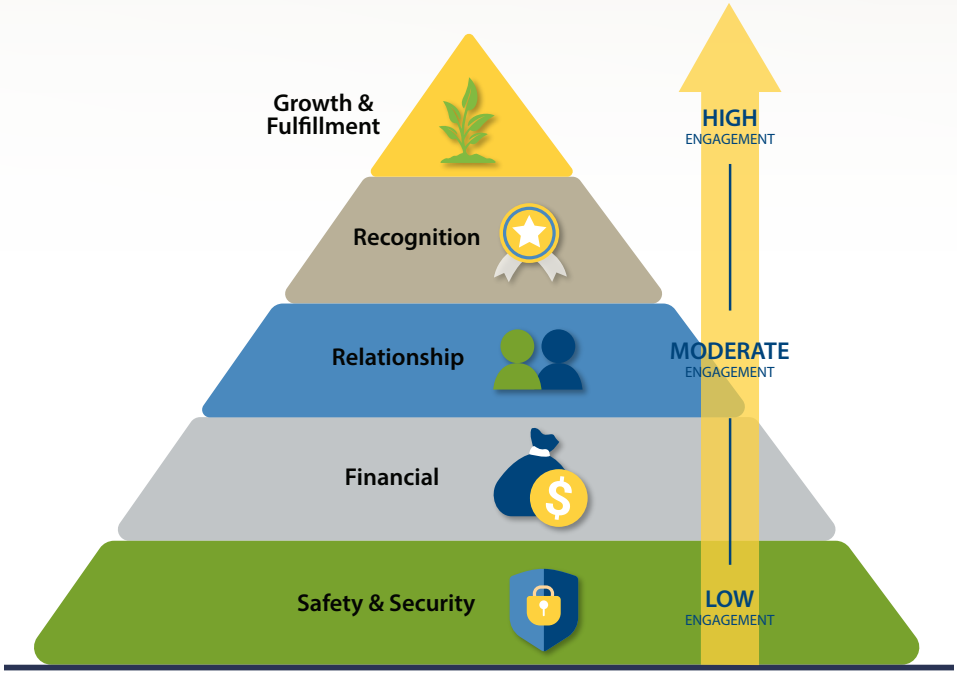
Reese encouraged others to put forth their own nominations for consideration.

"Know of a great candidate? Submit their name to an HR leader or business partner," she said. "This recognition will be awarded annually in August of each year." □

Understanding employee turnover and needs

By Sarah Pritchett

The Saratoga Institute estimates employee turnover to cost an organization the equivalent of one year's total salary in productivity. If a company of 100 people has 15% voluntary turnover with an average salary of $45,000, they are estimated to lose $675,000 each year.



Hierarchy of employee needs

For most organizations, an overwhelming majority of this turnover – 95% – is avoidable. What can we at WAPA do about it? First, we must know why people are leaving.

What would you guess is the top reason people leave their jobs?

If you were a manager interviewed by the Saratoga Institute, you might have been part of the 89% who said, "more money." However, nearly 90% of employees leave for reasons relating to disengagement, and only 11% leave due to monetary opportunities. These other reasons include what's outlined in the hierarchy of employee needs.

Lack of safety or security in the workplace accounted for 17% of employees exiting the workforce. This commonly refers to demotivating job duties resulting from not having adequate resources to perform the job properly.

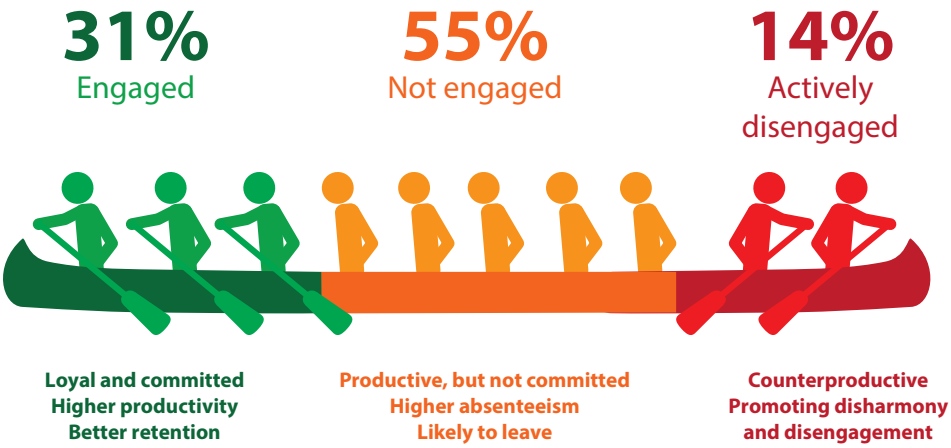
Relationship issues (30%) include lack of respect or support from colleagues or supervisors, supervisors' lack of leadership or technical skills and other social issues.

Lack of recognition (33%) is primarily appreciation-based; employees felt they were not often credited or recognized for their contributions.

Lack of growth or fulfillment (20%) typically means limited advancement opportunities and resources for employees to develop their skills.

Surveys such as these have been conducted since as early as 1966, and the results are largely consistent over time.

Ultimately, employees need a work culture with the social and technical



Importance of employee engagement

resources to grow in order to feel empowered, motivated and engaged in a work environment. Organizations can foster such an environment to minimize avoidable turnover, which represents 95% of an average company's turnover.

Organizational impacts of disengagement

Preventing and treating employee disengagement is important to every organization, as disengaged employees cost $3,400 for each $10,000 salary each year. That's $17,000 of wasted time per year for an employee making a $50,000 annual salary.

Organizations with more engaged workers report significantly higher customer satisfaction, productivity and profitability due to lower turnover, theft, safety incidents and more. The Gallup organization estimates that employees fall into three buckets: engaged, not engaged and actively disengaged.

Fostering employee engagement can be extremely effective. Engaged employees report 81% lower absenteeism, 58% fewer safety incidents, 18% less turnover in high-turnover organizations, 43% less turnover in low-turnover organizations, 28% less theft, 41% fewer quality defects, 18% higher sales and 23% higher profitability.

Put simply, disengaged employees can lead to higher turnover, increased accidents and decreased quality of work and productivity.

Preventing and treating disengagement

Preventing and treating disengagement is a complicated issue; employees vary greatly in terms of what makes them feel engaged in a job.

Some employees appreciate monetary bonuses, days off or flexible work schedules, and other employees feel valued by having a great physical work environment. It boils down to understanding what motivates employees and promoting a culture of understanding and empowerment.

Companies with employees who feel engaged often do several things.

They have a well-defined schedule for pay increases and promotions, in terms of who gets them and why.

Their managers and leaders provide timely and consistent feedback to empower employees to succeed. Companies that have regular employee feedback experience a 9% lower turnover rate on average and 50% of disengaged employees interviewed mentioned they never received regular feedback.

They provide employees with good working conditions. Examples include no distracting environments, clean and safe work areas, adequate breaks and performance expectations, adequate temperature of work area and access to appropriate tools to get the job done.

They assign mentors or coaches to new employees. In fact, 87% of companies who utilize this technique said new-hire proficiency was reached significantly faster. Strong orientation programs like these are known to lower new-hire turnover by up to 82% and increase productivity by over 70%.

These companies have a strong formal and informal recognition culture that is regular, timely and conducted in a way that is well-received by the individual, whether in the form of days off, a lunch out, assignments to desirable projects, recognition in team meetings or other options.

Engaged employees enjoy a strong career path program, ensuring that employees are aware of the business's strategic goals. Leaders should discuss these goals in terms of each department's role in achieving them, mention upcoming events that may impact career options for employees and ensure that employees have access to company reports and industry trends so that they're more informed of their role and the direction of the company.

This will in turn provide a better direction in providing recognizable value for the organization.

Moving forward

It's important to know that we can't prevent disengagement in every employee, but we can certainly try. Treating disengagement can be difficult, but it mostly involves understanding the "why" behind the "what" and designing a path forward with an individual or group.

To address disengagement, consider revisiting the hierarchy of employee needs and assessing what you as an individual or supervisor do to satisfy those needs; the suggestions above are not an all-inclusive list.

We can better understand our own contributions and needs by assessing how we are currently feeling about our jobs and why. Start with yourself and work outward to build a better, more engaged workplace. ☐

Note: Pritchett is a leadership development specialist.

The Leadership Development Program held a webinar on Burnout and Disengagement in September with additional information on this topic. Watch the webinar at **myWAPA, Programs, Leadership Development, Leadership Essentials Webinars**

Protect your home; be Firewise

By Paul Robbins

Every year it seems like wildfire activity exceeds the previous year, and 2021 has already done just that. Hot weather and drought conditions are increasing and intensifying wildfire dangers throughout the West.

Between January and August of this year, there were approximately 5,500 more fires than during the same period in 2020, and they burned 1.3 million more acres, according to the National Interagency Fire Center. Protecting your home from wildfire is a key message from the NIFC.

"When it comes to protecting homes and communities from wildfires, firefighters need your help," according to the NIFC website. "As more of us live in the urban interface where homes and communities meet the wildlands, wildfire prevention and protection become everyone's responsibility."

The NIFC has teamed up with the National Fire Protection Association to promote Firewise USA, a program educating the public about protecting their homes and neighborhoods from wildfire.

Ember attacks

The NFPA identifies embers and small flames as the primary threat to most homes during wildfires.

Embers are burning pieces of vegetation or wood, which can travel more than a mile by wind. Sometimes called "ember attacks," they rain down on residential areas and cause spot fires, igniting debris, homes and other flammable objects.

Home Ignition Zone

Experiments, studies and models show home ignition is directly tied to the condition of the property surrounding the home up to 200 feet from the foundation. This area is called the Home Ignition Zone.

For those with smaller properties, this zone is broken down into three smaller sub-zones that can be applied to any size yard. These sub-zones are summarized below with related fire protection strategies.

Immediate Zone

The most vulnerable area to flying embers is zero to five feet from the outermost attached exterior part of the home.

When you begin preparing this area, start at the house and work outward. Clean gutters and roofs, removing anything that can catch embers such as pine needles, dead leaves and other debris. While you are up there, check for loose or missing roof tiles or shingles and clear debris from exterior attic and eave vents.

You can also prevent embers from passing through these vents by installing one-eighth-inch metal mesh screening. Check window and patio screens for damage and replace if necessary. Remove anything flammable from the exterior walls and from underneath porches and decks. This might include flammable plants, mulch, firewood piles or anything else that can burn.

Intermediate Zone

This area is five to 30 feet out from the structure.

Use cautious landscaping and creation of breaks known as "hardscaping," which can influence fire behavior and decrease fire hazards. This includes creating breaks with walkways, paths, driveways, decks and patios.

Keep native grasses and lawns mowed to four inches tall and remove vegetation from under stationary propane tanks if you have them. Vegetation under trees, called ladder fuels, needs to be removed so that surface fire cannot climb to the treetop, also known as the crown.

Prune trees six to 10 feet above the ground. If you have short trees, prune up to one-third of the tree height. Plan placement of trees so that your mature canopy is more than 10 feet from the edge of the structure and space trees with a minimum of 18 feet between their tops. Limit shrub and tree groupings to small clusters.

Extended Zone

This area is anything from 30 to 100 feet, and as far out as 200 feet if you have a large property. You may not be able to eliminate fire in this zone; however, you can interrupt the path of the fire and keep flames smaller and close to the ground.

Remove and dispose of dense ground debris or litter; dead tree or plant materials; small conifers between mature trees; and vegetation next to outbuildings or storage sheds.

Use what is known as "crown spacing" to prevent or reduce the potential of tree crown fires. This strategy can vary depending on property slope, species of trees and other specific site conditions. Consult your local forestry professional for advice on what crown spacing strategy is appropriate for your property.

Help yourself, your home and first responders by being Firewise. ☐

For more information on being Firewise, visit **nfpa.org/Public-Education/Fire-causes-and-risks/Wildfire/Firewise-USA**

Note: Robbins is a technical writer who works under the Cherokee Nation Strategic Programs contract. Information in this article is adapted from that provided by the National Interagency Fire Center and the National Fire Protection Association.

Get out quick: the 72-hour go-bag

If you need to leave fast, have a "72-hour go-bag" ready, containing medications, eyeglasses, contact lenses, toiletries, credit cards, cash, cellphone chargers, clothes, emergency contacts, non-perishable food, insurance cards and other necessities.

"It's a real game changer if people are able to maintain themselves for 72 hours after disaster strikes," said Fire Chief T.J. Steck of the Elizabeth Fire Protection District in Colorado. "It allows emergency resources to catch up with response demands."

Emergency responder access

Ensure your home and neighborhood have legible and clearly marked street names and numbers. Driveways should be at least 12 feet wide with a vertical clearance of 15 feet for emergency vehicle access.

- Develop, discuss and practice an emergency action plan with everyone in your home. Include details for handling pets, large animals and livestock.
- Know two ways out of your neighborhood and have a predesignated meeting place.
- Always evacuate if you feel it's unsafe to stay. Don't wait to receive an emergency notification if you feel threatened from the fire.
- Conduct an annual insurance policy checkup to adjust for local building costs, codes and new renovations.
- Create or update a home inventory to help settle claims faster.

Information from NFPA Firewise Fact Sheet, "How to Prepare Your Home for Wildfires."

Take the *Closed Circuit* readership survey

Every two years, *Closed Circuit* staff polls readers to better understand how the magazine is meeting their needs.This past two-year period, in particular, has seen a lot of change, and your feedback is more valuable than ever.

Please take a moment to complete our readership survey online and help *Closed Circuit* determine its direction for the future.

1. What is your relationship to WAPA?
a) Current WAPA employee
b) Previous WAPA employee
c) Customer
d) Other: _____

2. How often do you read *Closed Circuit*?
a) Every issue
b) Every few issues
c) Once or twice per year
d) Never

3. How thoroughly do you read *Closed Circuit*?
a) I read every story.
b) I skim every story.
c) I skim some stories, to see if anything interests me.
d) I might or might not read it at all.

4. Due to the pandemic, *Closed Circuit* has been a digital-only publication since early 2020. Would you like to see this continue post-pandemic?
a) Yes; I prefer digital-only distribution.
b) No; I believe it should be distributed physically.
If no, what do you feel is the benefit of physical publication?
_____

5. What do you prefer to read in *Closed Circuit*?
a) Easy-to-understand overviews
b) Detailed explanations

6. Which of the following would you prefer?
a) Long articles with as much information as possible
b) Moderate-length articles with only basic context and information
c) Short articles with only critical information

7. When *Closed Circuit* includes quotes from WAPA employees, from whom do you prefer hearing?
a) Senior leaders
b) Program managers
c) Ground-level employees

8. What would you like to see more of in *Closed Circuit*? (Select all that apply.)
a) Program and project spotlights
b) Employee spotlights
c) Advice and information from subject-matter experts
d) "Get to know" features breaking down complex programs and initiatives
e) Q&A columns answering employee questions
f) Other: _____

9. Rate the quality of the following aspects of *Closed Circuit's* presentation.

Writing	1	2	3	4	5
Image choice	1	2	3	4	5
Layout and design	1	2	3	4	5

10. Rate *Closed Circuit's* performance in the following areas.

Helps me understand WAPA's goals and initiatives	1	2	3	4	5
Helps me see where my job fits into the organization	1	2	3	4	5
Explains programs/initiatives that were unfamiliar to me	1	2	3	4	5
Provides useful and actionable information through Safety Corner	1	2	3	4	5
Reinforces WAPA's core values	1	2	3	4	5
Helps me learn about other departments and programs	1	2	3	4	5
Helps me feel connected to the organization	1	2	3	4	5
Provides meaningful and relevant information	1	2	3	4	5
Allows me to find information about issues that interest me	1	2	3	4	5
Helps me learn about my coworkers	1	2	3	4	5

11. *Closed Circuit* is a source of credible information.
a) True
b) False

12. *Closed Circuit* is a professional and modern publication.
a) True
b) False

13. I sometimes share *Closed Circuit* stories with colleagues who would enjoy or benefit from them.
a) True
b) False

14. What is one thing *Closed Circuit* does well?
_____
_____

15. What one-word description do you feel best applies to *Closed Circuit*?
_____
_____

16. Identify one article from *Closed Circuit* that you specifically enjoyed.
_____
_____

17. Identify one article from *Closed Circuit* that you specifically did not enjoy.
_____
_____

18. What would make you read *Closed Circuit* more regularly?
_____
_____

19. If you are a current employee, select your pay plan.
a) Administratively determined
b) Wage board
c) General schedule
d) Contractor
e) Not applicable

20. If you are a current employee, select your location.
a) Colorado River Storage Project Management Center
b) Desert Southwest
c) Headquarters
d) Rocky Mountain
e) Sierra Nevada
f) Upper Great Plains
g) Washington Liaison Office
h) Not applicable

Complete this survey electronically at **surveymonkey.com/r/ClosedCircuit2021** by Nov. 15.

Brief Transmissions

Full vaccination required by Nov. 22

In the interest of protecting the health and safety of the country's government workforce, President Biden has issued an Executive Order requiring all federal employees to be fully vaccinated by Nov. 22.

This requirement applies to all federal employees regardless of remote, telework or onsite reporting status, except in limited circumstances in which an employee may be exempt due to a legally required accommodation.

Though the Executive Order gives federal employees until Nov. 22 to be fully vaccinated, all employees must receive their second dose of the Moderna or Pfizer vaccination, or the single-dose Johnson & Johnson vaccination, by Nov. 8 in order to be compliant.

Dates for remaining compliant with this Executive Order are found in the chart below.

	Moderna	Pfizer-BioNTech	Johnson & Johnson
First shot	Oct. 11	Oct. 18	Nov. 8
Second shot	Nov. 8	Nov. 8	n/a
Fully vaccinated	Nov. 22	Nov. 22	Nov. 22

Agencies are required to have federal employees provide proof of vaccination and certify under penalty of perjury that the documentation being submitting is true and correct. The Department of Energy will provide additional information as it becomes available.

Closed Circuit appreciates your continued support, cooperation and patience as we learn more about these requirements.

New VPN connection available

An additional virtual private network is now available to all WAPA employees. The option "GemRA1 – Germantown" is available through the Cisco AnyConnect Secure Mobility Client. If it does not show up in the list of options, employees are advised to reboot their computers.

The connection takes advantage of new, more robust hardware that offers better performance. GemRA1 will replace RA2, but RA2 will continue to be available for VPN connections for a short period during the transition.

If you experience issues accessing or using this new connection, contact **witcc@wapa.gov**

Benefits Open Season Begins Nov. 8

The 2021 Federal Benefits Open Season will take place from Nov. 8 - Dec. 13.

During this period, federal employees have the opportunity to enroll, change plans, change plan options, change enrollment type or cancel enrollment for the Federal Employees Health Benefits Program and the Federal Employees Dental and Vision Insurance Program. Federal employees also have the opportunity to re-enroll or newly enroll in the Federal Flexible Spending Account Program.

Plan brochures, premiums and other Federal Benefits Open Season information will be available in early November at **opm.gov/openseason**

For more information, visit **myWAPA, Departments, Human Resources Shared Service Center, Benefits** and click on Open Season Information.

For questions about Federal Benefits Open Season or your benefits, contact **Timothy Lammon** at **lammon@wapa.gov** or **720.962.7127**, or **Krystle Neal** at **klneal@wapa.gov** or **720.962.7107**

WAPA launches streamlined telework process

On Oct. 1, WAPA launched a streamlined process that allows federal employees to easily initiate, recertify or make changes to telework agreements. It also allows supervisors to approve or reject requests and shows outstanding requests via dashboard.

To access the new process, visit the IT Service Portal and navigate to Telework Request under Employee Support.

For more information about the new process, see the Sept. 30 myWAPA news item, "New telework request process available." This includes links to how-to and FAQ documents.

For questions about completing the forms or the automated process, visit the IT Service Portal and use the WAYS System Support catalog item to initiate a ticket. For questions about telework or associated policies, contact **gerrish@wapa.gov**