



Letter from TCU/CWA Organizing Committee to President Shelton

Christopher Shelton, President
Communications Workers of America, AFL-CIO
501 Third Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear President Shelton,

As members of the Organizing Committee for CWA's newly formed Tower Climbers Union, we write to give you an update on the ongoing crises facing tower technicians. Our current membership works for over 45 different companies and reside in more than 20 states, but our ranks grow larger every day.

As you know, we construct, maintain, and decommission towers and antennas. We install and repair all forms of telecommunications equipment. Our labor connects families, communities, neighbors, and businesses. Our labor enables law enforcement, firefighters and emergency responders to arrive quickly. Our skill, dedication and expertise has built America's communications infrastructure. Without our labor, our nation's wireless networks would cease to function.

We love and take great pride in our work, but it is dangerous and we are worthy of much more. One mistake can result in a fatal accident, making training, strict adherence to safety rules and protocols, and having collective bargaining rights paramount. While the dangerous conditions in our industry have gotten the attention of the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), there has never been a safety survey conducted by, of and for tower technicians; **until now**. Here are some preliminary findings that reveal just how ingrained dangerous conditions are in this industry. With over 100 survey respondents so far as of April 15, 2023, here is what our fellow tower technicians are saying:

- 65.3% Respondents have been on a job site where someone has been injured
- 53.4% Respondents report that “deadlines for completing our assignments are unreasonable and cause pressure to cut corners that could compromise our safety.”
- 50.5% Respondents work on towers where they worry about its maintenance and structural integrity.
- 40.2% Respondents experience strong or some pressure to work in unsafe weather conditions.
- 24.7% Respondents report that when a safety incident is investigated, the most frequent outcome is that “nothing happens”.
- 4.0% Respondents have been on a job site where someone was fatally injured.

We proudly work one of our nation’s most dangerous jobs. Yet, 11.7% of our direct employers do not carry Workers’ Compensation Insurance and 31.4% do not provide short-term disability insurance. This is the result of our employer of record being one of hundreds of mostly small contractors and subcontractors trying to survive in a marketplace full of cutthroat competition. Many of our direct employers want to do the right thing by us, and try hard to do so. But the wireless carriers and tower owners have the real power and use it to punish contractors that treat us with respect. Behind the scenes, the carriers and tower owners are the ones pulling the strings to push down wages and conditions through all the layers of contracting that ultimately determine our conditions. Here is what our survey findings reveal:

- 98.9% Respondents indicate **wireless carriers** impose rules or work requirements that can cause safety concerns or hazards.
- 88.9% Respondents indicate **tower owners** impose rules and work requirements that can cause safety concerns or hazards.
- 77.5% Respondents have experienced **wireless carriers** imposing unrealistic deadlines for completing jobs.
- 74.7% Respondents have experienced **tower owners** restricting what tools we can use on a job.
- 58.8% Respondents have experienced **wireless carriers** restricting what tools we can use on a job.

As we peel away the layers of this contracting scheme, we find seven companies at its core: **AT&T, Verizon, T-Mobile, Dish Network, American Tower, Crown Castle, and SBA Communications.** From this day forward, we are going to organize and fight until they take full responsibility for our labor, because we deserve more.

We believe all tower technicians have a right to:

- Fair Compensation
- A Safe Workplace
- Healthcare and Retirement Benefits
- Job Security
- Work/Life Balance
- A Union Voice on the Job

We are honored to join the CWA family and appreciate your leadership and support of our efforts to organize and make every tower technician job union.

In Solidarity,

Cameron Barajas - Bellevue, Washington
Roland Batchelder - Palmyra, New Jersey
Brett Bradley - Yelm, Washington
Daniel Davey - Orland Park, Illinois
Ryan Dupal - Syracuse, New York
Joshua Galovin - Kelso, Washington
Troy Putman - Portland, Oregon
Tommy Schuch - Crystal Lake, Illinois
Jacob Shaw - Bloomington, Indiana
Eric Tavegia - Gresham, Oregon
Shawn Taylor - Vancouver, Washington
Craig Ungaro - Paisley, Florida