

## SPEEA wins back pay and benefits for hundreds of Boeing employees in California



Employees of The Boeing Company who worked in Palmdale and Edwards Air Force Base, Calif., are due back pay and benefits that could total in the millions, according to an arbitrator. The Nov. 1 ruling said the company for years wrongly denied the engineers and technical workers the better pay and benefits of employees represented by the Society of Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA), IFPTE Local 2001.

The ruling rejected every Boeing argument and culminates a near 12-year effort by SPEEA to reestablish union representation for the now more than 550 employees Boeing denied coverage under SPEEA Professional and Technical collective bargaining agreements going back to 1999.

“It’s ethically deplorable that Boeing disregarded the plain language of these contracts, imposed its own interpretation and denied these employees the pay and benefits they were entitled to,” said Rich Plunkett, SPEEA director of strategic development. “This is not a technical violation. It’s a violation that took money out of employee paychecks and benefits away from their families.”

The arbitrator ordered Boeing to “make whole” all engineering and technical employees who worked at the sites in job classifications represented by SPEEA since March 5, 2001. Stating: “*Clearly, the employees who were wrongfully excluded from the professional and technical bargaining units suffered a loss due to the time value of money,*” the arbitrator also ordered Boeing to pay each employee 10 percent interest on the back pay. Boeing must also pay SPEEA back dues for the affected employees and cover the cost of arbitration.

Since 1976, engineers and technical workers at the sites were recognized as being covered under the SPEEA Puget Sound Professional and Technical contracts. However, starting in 2000, SPEEA learned Boeing was listing and filling engineer and technical positions at Edwards Air Force Base and Boeing Palmdale as non-union positions. The company’s action resulted in employees receiving lower pay and reduced benefits than called for in the union contracts.

Taking action to remedy the issue, SPEEA filed a grievance against Boeing in March 2001. With Boeing fighting and appealing every step of the way, the issue resulted in a National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) decision for SPEEA in 2006. Boeing appealed that decision, bringing on a whole new series of actions and appeals which finally brought the issue to the federal arbitrator in May.

Over the years, union membership at Edwards Air Force Base and Palmdale steadily declined as workers transferred, retired or left Boeing. The arbitrator’s award includes employees hired before and after the grievance was filed.

The full [Opinion and Award of the Arbitrator](http://www.speea.org) is available on the SPEEA website at: [www.speea.org](http://www.speea.org).

SPEEA and Boeing are presently negotiating new contracts for 23,000 engineers and technical workers at facilities around Puget Sound, Portland, Utah and California. Union members rejected Boeing’s initial offer by 96 percent. Talks continue this week.

A local of the International Federation of Professional and Technical Engineers (IFPTE), SPEEA represents 26,560 aerospace professionals at Boeing, Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kansas, and Triumph Composite Systems, Inc. in Spokane, Wash.

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