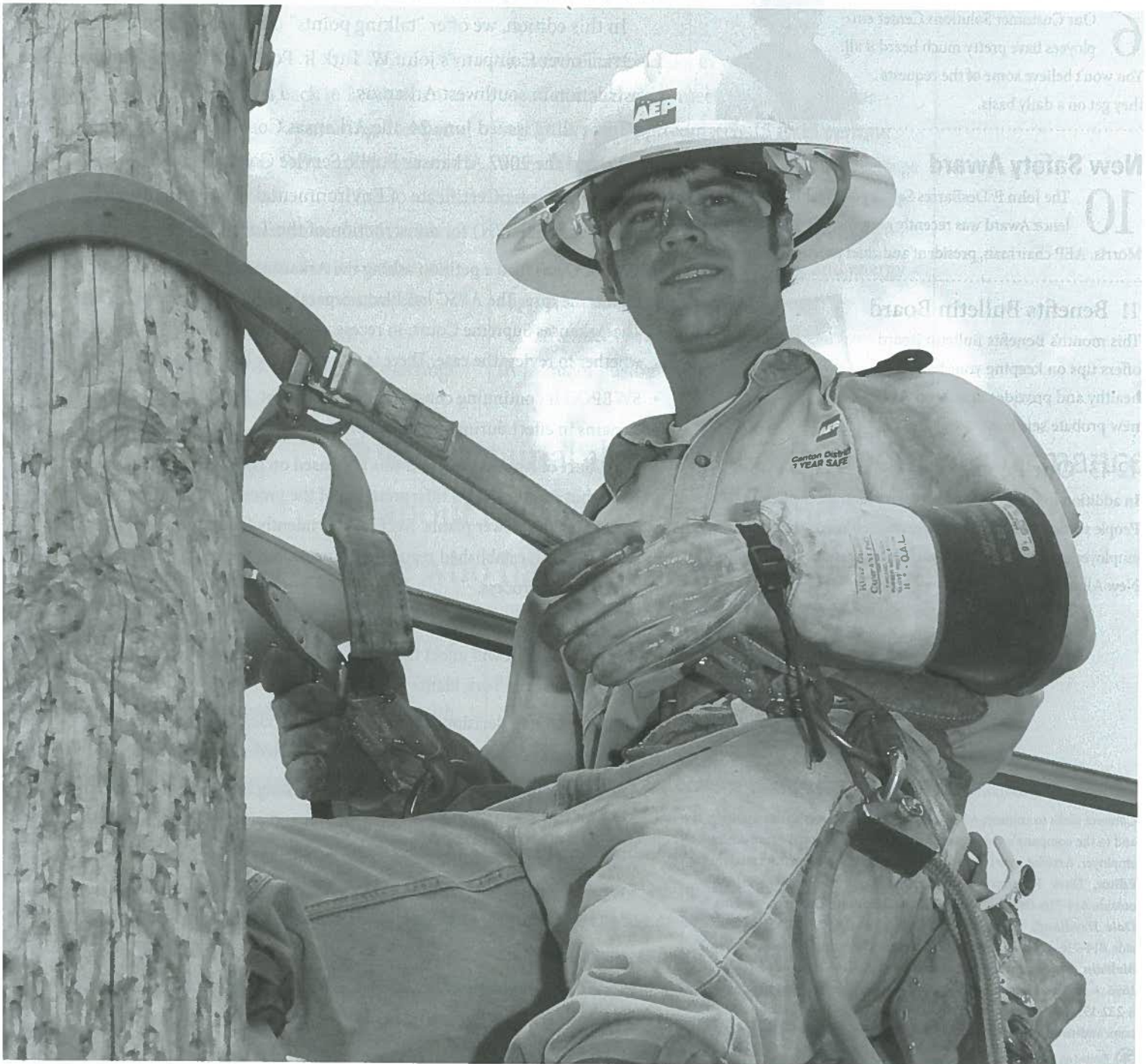


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# CONNECT





Carol Warren participates in an AEP-sponsored tour of the Dolan Lab.

carbon capture and sequestration, the cost and reliability of electricity, the impact of the recession on our company and our customers, and many other issues,” she said.

At the outset, AEP’s stakeholder meetings focused on how the company should communicate these and other issues in its yearly Sustainability Report. More recent stakeholder meetings, however, have taken a step beyond that by looking at how AEP should act on these issues.

Here’s how three participants describe their experiences in the stakeholder meetings:

#### **Carol Warren, Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition**

Mountaintop removal mining is the issue that strikes the strongest chord with Carol Warren, who is project coordinator for the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition, as well as a lobbyist with the Catholic Conference of West Virginia.

“Mountaintop mining has a devastating effect on communities in terms of environmental degradation, water quality, health problems and loss of culture,” she said. “I realize that an electric utility wants to use the lowest-priced coal that meets its plants’ specifications, but I’ve asked AEP to do everything possible to avoid the use of coal from mountaintop mining.

“I was encouraged to learn that AEP is putting together a ‘Coal Supplier Scorecard’ to gauge the environmental and safety performance of its coal suppliers, and I’m looking forward to seeing how that works out,” Warren noted. “I’m encouraged that AEP wants to be a leader in this area.”

Warren recalled that she served with Mark Dempsey, Appalachian Power’s vice president of external affairs, on former Governor Bob Wise’s Task Force on Energy, “and I got the impression that AEP people are people I can have a dialogue with. Attending the stakeholder meeting rein-

forced that impression for me.

“West Virginia has a significant number of low-income households, and we definitely need more programs to help people with utility payments. I can’t emphasize enough how much I’m concerned about that, but I sometimes find myself defending AEP on the subject of rates,” she said. “If we want green power, smart meters and distributed generation, someone has to pay for it.”

#### **Sonia Marcus, Ohio University**

“A colleague and I attended the stakeholder meeting for large consumers of electricity,” said Sonia Marcus, sustainability coordinator at Ohio University. “Ohio was the only college or university represented there. All of the other participants were insistent that there should not be any rate increases, but we were equally concerned with other issues besides the cost of electricity.

“Ohio University is signatory to the American College and University Presidents’ Climate Commitment, and we’ve pledged to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions and carbon footprint,” she said. “This commitment to environmental stewardship is guiding our decisions regarding campus life.

“A lot of the students here who are interested in environmental issues see AEP as this very evil force, and this is something that AEP needs to recognize,” Marcus said. “A lot of hot-button issues — from power plant emissions to mountaintop mining — fall under the auspices of AEP.”

Marcus commented that she was “very impressed with the company’s openness and willingness to communicate frankly and honestly, but not as impressed with the speed at which AEP is making changes.”

The companies represented at the meeting that Marcus attended “didn’t want to see any



At left, Sonia Marcus (left) and an Ohio University student visit the school's solar-powered compost facility. At right, Steven Asplundh poses in front of one of the company's trucks.



increases in their electric bills," she noted, "but how do you expect AEP to bear these costs (for environmental and energy-efficiency improvements) alone?" she asked. "Someone has to step up and say these things are of value to us."

#### **Steven Asplundh, Asplundh Tree Expert Co.**

"I was very impressed with the concept of inviting people to talk about issues that are forward looking, instead of merely reacting to some specific problem that has already surfaced," said Steven Asplundh, senior vice president of Asplundh Tree Expert Co., who attended a stakeholder meeting on work force issues.

"AEP has definitely raised the bar in terms of contractor safety, but I believe our two companies are hand-in-hand in how we deal with a maturing work force, and how we place a tremendous emphasis on employee training, safety, health and wellness," he said.

"AEP and Asplundh have been partners in a formalized alliance in recent years, and I believe we're learning from each other. The big questions are, 'How do you get employees to live an injury-free lifestyle?' and 'How do you make it personal?' It doesn't do much good for an employee to use a chain saw safely on the job if he goes home and uses it without any regard to safety.

"Sustainability isn't something that you just write a report about and say you're finished," he emphasized. "It's ongoing, it's a journey, and I think AEP makes that very clear — both in its meetings and in its Sustainability Report." ❖

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## **AEP executives speak**

What do AEP executives say about stakeholder meetings?

Mike Morris, AEP chairman, president and chief executive officer, recently said, "Our experience with stakeholder engagement has been positive, and we believe this process gives us a credible forum to respectfully and productively share information, opinions and concerns."

"One of the biggest failures of companies and people is not listening to others," said Dennis Welch, executive vice president, Environment, Safety & Health and Facilities. "We cannot be sustainable as a company if we are convinced that only our way is the correct way."

In today's business world, failing to communicate directly with stakeholders can have serious consequences, Nessing added. "A recent survey showed that six of every 10 shareholder resolutions at corporate annual meetings last year were related to sustainability reporting — or the lack of it," she said.

"When you have conversation and collaboration, you greatly reduce the likelihood of confrontation," Nessing concluded, "and that's a very good thing."