



NYDailyNews.com
DAILY NEWS

No-work and all pay at Ground Zero as rebuilding costs up \$96 million under lax union rules

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Sunday, May 8th 2011, 4:00 AM



Warga/News

In the next three years, no-work jobs could add \$96.2 million to the cost of the many World Trade Center rebuilding projects

No-work jobs in a mob-linked union could add nearly \$100 million to the public cost of rebuilding Ground Zero, a new report charges.

The Real Estate Board of [New York](#), a major developers' group, says antiquated rules let a cadre of crane and heavy equipment workers pocket six-figure paychecks for little more than showing up.

In the next three years the no-work jobs, controlled by Locals 14 and 15 of the Operating Engineers, could add \$96.2 million to the cost of [World Trade Center](#) projects, the REBNY says.

The projects include the Freedom Tower, the transit hub, the 9/11 Memorial and surrounding street work.

Contractor and union sources confirmed that the eight tower cranes at the WTC site guarantee a bonanza for Local 14 operating engineers and the Local 15 specialists who fix them.

On one day in mid-March, for example, contractors said 56 of 204 Local 14 and Local 15 employees on site held no-work jobs.

The board compiled the statistics in the runup to contract talks with the operating engineers and all the city's construction unions, which start next month.

Local 14 and 15 officials did not return calls seeking comment.

Many of the jobs are vestiges of an era in which the [Colombo](#) and Genovese crime families controlled Locals 14 and 15. Local 14 has been under a federal monitor since 2009.

One example is the full-time Local 14 "master mechanics" the contractor must hire whenever five pieces of heavy equipment or three tower cranes are in use.

With a \$135,000 base salary, a master mechanic can make a staggering \$405,000 a year with overtime that's guaranteed by six-day, 12- to 16-hour-a-day schedules. Welfare benefits, insurance and other costs hike the annual bill to \$700,000 for that one mechanic.

It's a ridiculous requirement, REBNY says, because the manufacturer or crane owner does the repairs, not the contractor's master mechanics.

Instead, they are glorified shop stewards, a part-time job in most unions. With three required on site a day, that should cost about \$6.3 million through 2013, the board says.

Master mechanic [Carl Carrara Sr.](#), identified as a Genovese associate, was charged in a 2003 racketeering conspiracy as the mob's point man in a no-show scam at the [Museum of Modern Art](#).

He and six other master mechanics pleaded guilty that year in two cases that put much of Local 14 and 15's leadership behind bars.

Local 15 demands a similar piece of the action via "maintenance engineers." They're required on site full time when a master mechanic is there and three major pieces of equipment are operating in case any machines need fixing.

"There is nothing for these guys to do," a World Trade Center construction supervisor said. Eliminating that requirement would save \$7.5 million over three years at Ground Zero, REBNY says.

Then there's the Local 15 position of "crane oiler," a relic from the days when equipment needed frequent lubrication. An oiler is required on site when any tower crane is in use.

Today, the oiler simply fires up the crane at the start of work. With overtime, he can earn more than \$100,000 a year.

And there's Local 14's "stationary equipment operator," with one assigned to each compressor, welding machine and spray fireproofer in use. With overtime, they pull down about \$110,000 a year, REBNY estimated.

A World Trade Center construction supervisor who asked not to be identified said technology has reduced the job to two simple functions: "They turn the machine on in the morning and turn it off at night," the supervisor said. "They are basically non-essential."

REBNY wants the city to loosen the union's influence over who gets licensed to operate heavy machinery.

Now, only operators with city licenses can work here, and applicants must train with city crane operators - virtually all union workers. That gives the two locals a stranglehold on major projects.

"Locals 14 and 15 have the hammer. They have the power to shut down a job," said [Steven Spinola](#), president of REBNY, which wants to be able to hire nationally licensed crane operators.