

What Our Work Consists of Outside the Pipe Gang and Firing Line

By Preston Ri'chard

1. Be involved, find out what section goes in first, do we need a trench box to work in? Can they dig a safe bell hole, if not use the trench box? If you are told to work in an unsafe bell hole or unsafe conditions you can refuse. I had an inspector call me about an unsafe bell hole, when he talked to the tie-in man about it he was told not to worry, the inspector really did not need to get down in the hole, that tie-in man was ran off on safety issues. The tractor drivers should stay on the equipment until there is at least a hot pass in the weld; according to most company safety policies they need to be on the equipment as long they are holding a load. If the tie-in or lower-in foreman does not want to comply, call to inform the welder foreman and job steward.
2. All stabbing of the pipe whether in the pipe gang, fab or tie-ins is the work of the U.A. The setting, handling, tightening or loosening of the clamps is our work. The clamps can be carried down to the next weld by the side boom or hoe, set down onto the pipe and the chain unhooked, after this WE latch the clamps, slide it into place and make up the joint with the clamps. The clamp should be set for one of the welders or helpers to work the handle, the tie in man does not tighten and loosen the clamps, we do. We communicate to the tie in man what we need on the space and hi-lo. If the pipe is to heavy in the clamps you will know it and a tractor may have to be moved. This is your weld, get it the way you want it, when you fire up on the weld it is yours for better or worse. If for some reason the tie-in man will

not leave the clamp handle alone or wants to beat on the clamps inform him this is our work. If he refuses to leave our work alone, when he gets it tight a welder or a helper needs to just reach up and loosen it off to start over. This is probably a good time to call the welder foreman and the steward and wait for them to arrive and take care of informing the foreman that we will cover our work. You will not be moved or run off for protecting your work. Additionally, when the clamps are to be loaded into a truck for a move we should latch and tighten them and unlatch them after the move to keep them from getting twisted or bent. We have a picture of the internal clamps to show that even if they are being carried across a road with a tag line on them, the person on the tag line is a U.A. member.

3. Setting the area up to weld, such as skids, plywood or stirrups is our work. The unrolling and rolling up of leads and electrical cords, carrying of rod buckets, grinders and any other tools and mud boards into or out of the ditch, is the work of the U.A. whether you are working off rig trucks or sleds, again this is not the work any other craft on the job. If the tie-in, lower-in or road bore people want it done faster they can use a third helper in the crew which many times is an advantage to them. We can have the laborers stage material such as skids or plywood for us to set up as we need it to be. Staging means just stockpile it in the bell hole, excavation or fab area, not helping set it in. If you are not around giving input or helping do this work, when it is time to weld you have no right to start griping about the conditions. First rule, we do not start a weld in the rain, if it is enough rain to wipe

your clear lens, it is too much to start a weld, tents and umbrellas are for sunshine. Second RULE, we do not lay in a stream of water or mud to weld, on a rare occasion a thunderstorm may hit while you are finishing a weld and you get a tent or some kind of cover if the weld cannot be stopped, otherwise you cab up until the weld can be made in the dry. If the weld can be stopped and a wrap placed on it, we will wait for the rain to stop.

4. We should be ready to mark the cut when it is lined up to tie in. At least one welder should be in the ditch with his helper, not up on the bank watching two helpers make a cut. The helpers should help each other out getting ready to make a weld, if one helper is in the ditch the other helper can be getting buckets, grinders and leads as close to the work area as possible. The laborers do not assist in doing our work. If the tie-in or lower-in man wants to go any faster we can put a third helper with them. If you tell the laborers to stop doing your work and they do not, call the welder foreman, then let the steward know, I guarantee you it will come to a stop. We do have good welder foremen out there who will protect our work and stand up to the spread man, these are the type of foremen we need, not yes men. In the event your crew comes upon an anchor and deadman setup, the unbolting of the deadman is our work, U.A. people bolted it on in the pipe gang and we take it off, put the two halves back together with the same bolts for the deadman to be transported back to the pipe gang.

5. When we are working off sleds, the hooking and unhooking of the sled is to be done by the helpers. This is the same as hooking on to a welding rig to pull the rig. The fueling of the machines on a sled is also our work, along with the oxygen, acetylene, pre-heat bottles and water cans put on and taken off the sleds, we also fill our own water cans. The changing of the oil and filters is done by the contractor's grease man or mechanics, as we do not have ready access to our machines like when they are on our rig trucks. The contractor will furnish the fuel, oil and filters when our machines are on a sled.

6. When we are watching the rollers while pulling in a horizontal directional drill we do not leave to go weld out on welds that a tie-in foreman stopped us from welding out the day before, so he could keep the welders busy while his laborers do our work. When we set rollers, the easiest way is to flag the drill hole, so it can be seen from a distance and work your way towards the drill setting rollers. The rollers can be strung by laborers in the same manner that skids are, we then align the rollers on target, set the pipe on the rollers and check out the alignment. When the pipe is pulled on the rollers we watch the rollers and re-align them if necessary. Once the pipe is off the rollers our work is completed the rollers can be picked up as skids would be.

7. Fabrication – We unload all fittings and valves that need to be belted to take off the trucks, if they are on a pallet, a forklift can take them off. We set all skids in fabrication, whether it is setting pipe or fittings down or leveling up our work. We tie-on to all the

fittings and pipe to have it setting the way it is needed to get a proper fit or the correct angle. We pull our measurements to cut the valve settings in and we tie on to the fab so we can bring it in level without having to fight a line up or in some cases it may need to be brought in on an angle. We get our own line-ups installing the fabrication. If we must truck fab to a site, we load it and skid it, then tie it down where it will not bend any lines or damage any valves. We will need to work with the teamster in this case as he is ultimately responsible for the load he hauls, and I have never met a teamster yet that would not work with us on this.

8. Hot tie ins and spool ins – There should be a well laid out plan that has been communicated to all the hands involved so as not to have any misunderstanding. In the case that the ditch has been over dug, there needs to be a proper work platform to cut the football out, we do not need to work off ladders. In the event of an emergency your leg may slip thru a ladder rung and trap or injure you. The air movers should be attached and ready for use before we drill the pipe with an air drill. Once we have a half inch hole the gas control man will check for liquids in the bottom of the pipe. Welder helpers should be manning the fire extinguishers and speak fluent English. Laborers do not man our extinguishers because in case of a flame up they will be gone, they do not have a dog in this hunt and will not give that extra effort it takes. We have the football secured with chains and binders, we mud up behind our cuts, when the cut is complete

we let it cool for about a minute then take a fire extinguisher and empty it into the line thru a hole that was the first cut made and mudded, usually the drilled hole is cut larger to accept the extinguisher nozzle. We then release the chain binders, take a pry bar or similar tool whereby we can have a little more distance from the pipe in case of a flame up and flip the football out and insert the paddle to separate the 2 sides of the line. At this time, the gas control person will give the word to start the air movers that were installed by U.A. personnel and also operated by them, in some cases the gas company will have their company people handle the air movers. The gas control person will monitor gas readings and give the all clear when the pup may be cut out of the line.

9. Hydro-static testing – The work of designated testing journeymen sent in by the Business Agent in whose jurisdiction the work occurs is laid out in the contract. The testing journeyman is responsible for all screwed and flanged connections and works all valves under pressure. Anyone else sent back to the testing crew by the welder foreman to assist with the testing is not a testing journeyman or a testing welder. These persons sent back should not be allowed to dress, undress or operate any valves on the test headers in preparation for a hydro, gas or air test. They are not allowed to blow a section down after a test is complete. They should be allowed to assist in the following tasks. Weld up de-water and fill lines. Assist in loading pigs when cleaning or drying the line. All pigs pre-loaded into a header before welding onto the mainline will be done by a U.A. Journeyman or welder,

whether this is in tie-ins or testing. WE LOAD ALL PIGS. The contract calls for the testing helper to be a contract hire, for safety reasons all testing journeymen or testing welders should be allowed to bring in their helper or the B.A. SENDS IN A QUALIFIED HELPER.