



Union Labor: Leading the way for decent conditions and pay at Bridgestone/Firestone and throughout the tire industry

Union workers have led the way for many years in the struggle for decent standards of living and reasonable working conditions within the tire and rubber industry.

The gains working people have made in this industry did not come from the generosity of corporate officials. Rubber industry workers only emerged from low pay, unhealthful working conditions and outrageous demands for production when they organized and began to work together for their common goals. And the gains rubber workers have made were often a result of sacrifice and struggle on the part of union workers.

And workers at Bridgestone/Firestone have been in the forefront of this fight for the cause of rubber workers and their families from the onset.

Some things have changes, while others have not. The United Steelworkers now carries the union banners for workers in this highly profitable industry. And though the name of the workers' union may have changed, the corporate demands and threats to our standards of living have not.

What workers in the industry have today is a tribute to hard work and efforts of union workers who came before us.

What we will have tomorrow, and can pass along to those who come after us, depends on our willingness to stand up and be counted among our co-workers as we seek a fair union contract.

The following is a timeline of economic gains made by union workers in the rubber industry who were and still are dedicated to the idea of a safe, fair and honorable way of life for all working Americans.

- 1935 United Rubber Workers of America established on September 12 in Akron, Ohio. First major strike against the Big Four tire companies shows power of united workers in this industry, and wins improvements. Union sets goal of standardizing wages and benefits industry-wide. URW joins the newly founded CIO.
- 1936 Tire workers stage first "sit-down strike" against discriminatory practices at company, pay rates and layoffs of older workers. The sit-down strike was later used successfully by union auto workers.
- 1937 Firestone signs a contract after an 8-week strike, the first union contract with a major rubber company.
- 1938 URW successfully fights off a management demand for 17.5% wage cuts, as the Great Depression hits the industry. Goodrich and U.S. Rubber signed their first union contract.
- 1939 Union wins its first contract with General Tire.
- 1940 Vacations days first won by the URW despite company opposition: one week after two years of service and two weeks after five.
- 1941 Union wins 7.5 cent wage increase. Goodyear, the last of the Big Four, signs a union contract.
- 1942 During World War II, URW members take a no strike pledge in this vital wartime industry, and gain important improvements in job security, company-paid benefits and other work rules. Tires are rationed to the public.
- 1943 Hourly wage increases gained for workers by way of union negotiations.



- 1944 Union workers bargain for one week vacation after one year of service, as well as 3 cents per hour night shift bonus. The union also negotiates a 20-minute lunch period.
- 1945 In a union push to standardize wages and benefits, and the URW holds first successful companywide bargaining as U.S. Rubber covering 17 plants.
- 1946 Union negotiates wage increases of 18.5 cents per hour and double time for Sunday and holiday work. Union struggles to break down long-held discriminatory practices in industry.
- 1947 Wage increase of 11.5 cents, six paid holidays and a severance pay plan were gained through bargaining.
- 1948 Union workers gain three weeks vacation after 15 years and 11 cents per hour pay increases.
- 1949 The union-negotiated pension plan provided \$100 per month minimum (including Social Security.) The first company-paid life insurance program was also established.
- 1950 Pay increase of 12 cents per hour. Modified union shop established.
- 1951 Pay increase of 13 cents per hour. Full union shop established.
- 1952 Pay increase of 10 cents per hour. Triple time won by URW for work on holidays.
- 1953 Pay increase of 5 cents per hour. Hospitalization program negotiated covering 120 days plus surgical and hospital medical expenses with the company for the first time paying the full amount of cost for employees and dependents. Two weeks vacation established after three years service.
- 1954 Pay increase of 6.5 cents per hour.
- 1955 Pay increase of 12 cents per hour plus 2 cents for inequities. Union contract adds seventh paid holiday, as well as jury duty pay. Improvements made in pension and insurance programs.
- 1956 Union gains three weeks vacation after 11 years of service. Supplemental Unemployment Benefits (SUB) set up to help workers when laid off. Pay increase of 6.2 cents per hour.
- 1957 Pay increase of 15 cents per hour and four weeks vacation after 25 years of service.
- 1958 Pay increase of 8 cents per hour.
- 1959 Improvements made in the pension program and 10 cents per hour pay increase.
- 1960 Pay increase of 9.5 cents per hour plus inequity adjustments.
- 1961 Four weeks vacation after 22 years of service and 5 weeks after 25 years. Pay increase of 3.5 cents per hour and the 8th paid holiday established.
- 1962 Pay increase of 4 cents per hour.
- 1964 Four weeks vacation after 15 years of service, .0260 fringe benefits. Pay increase of 6.5 cents per hour. Pay increase of 6.5 cents per hour, .1400 fringe benefits. Improvements made in surgical and hospitalization benefits. Extended hospital confinement to cover 365 days. Pensions increased to \$3.25 for each year of service.
- 1965 6.5 cents per hour pay hike. Three weeks vacation after 10 years and 9th paid holiday.
- 1966 Pay increase of 9 cents per hour.
- 1967 Pay increase of 15 cents per hour. Vacation policy established at 2 weeks after 1 year of service, 3 weeks after 5 years, 5 weeks after 22 years and 6 weeks after 30 years. Pension hike for retirees to \$5.50 for each year of service as well as an increase of \$1.50 for each year of service for those already retired. Big improvements in hospitalization program, and hospitalization confinement extended to 730 days. Full coverage for surgical charges. SUB improved to 80%.
- 1968 Pay increase of 15 cents per hour.
- 1969 Pay increase of 13 cents per hour.
- 1970 30 cents per hour general wage increase, with an additional 15 cents per hour for skilled trades workers. New Year's Eve added as 10th Holiday per year. Increased pension benefits for future retirees by \$2.25 to \$7.75 per month per year of service. Pension increase of \$1.25 per month per year of service for present retirees. Vacations set at 5 weeks after 20 years. Increase in life insurance benefits. Increase in sick and accident pay to \$85 per employee. Established Joint Occupational Health Program.
- 1971 Pay increase of 26 cents per hour. An additional 10 cents per hour for Skilled Trades. Additional prescription drug benefits established.
- 1972 Pay increase of 26 cents per hour.



- 1973 Pay increase of 28.8 cents per hour. Pension increased to \$9.50 per month for each year of service. Prescription drug plan extended to new retirees. Payment for in-hospital doctor visits increased. Life insurance benefits increased from \$8,500 to \$9,500. Also, Sickness & Accident (S&A) benefits for employees established at \$85 to \$95 per week. Death benefit increased to pensioner's surviving spouse. Further improvements made in medical and hospitalization benefits.
- 1974 Pay increase of 28 cents per hour. Pensions increased to \$9.75 per month per year of service. Union bargains for pension supplement for early retirement. Prescription plan extended to past retirees.
- 1975 Pay hike of 24 cents per hour. Pension increases to \$10 per month per year of service.
- 1976 Historic settlement with the "Big Four" rubber companies includes \$1.35 per hour wage increase: 80 cents, 30 cents and 25 cents over the next three years. COLA (Cost-Of-Living-Adjustment) bargained for rubber workers is one of the best in U.S. industry, provides quarterly adjustments based on Consumer Price Index , with quarterly adjustments. Pension increased to \$12.50 per month per year of service. Skilled Trades to receive an additional 40 cents per hour. Past retirees get an additional \$1 per month per year of service. Chiropractic care added.
- 1977 Pay increase of 30 cents per hour and COLA payments yield 23 cents.
- 1978 Pay increase of 25 cents per hour and COLA payments yield 42 cents. Campaign begins to organize LaVergne, Tennessee plant, which ultimately involves a strike and an NLRB "bargaining order" before successful conclusion.
- 1979 One of the best wage/benefit packages negotiated by any labor union while President Carter's 7% ceiling on wage increases is in effect. Total general wage increase over the three year agreement is \$1.22 per hour: 52 cents an hour retroactive to April 23, 35 cents an hour in 1980 and 35 cents an hour in 1981. COLA payments amount to 76 per hour increase as well, giving Rubber Workers close to 100% protection against inflation. Pensions increase to \$15 per month per year of service. Skilled Trades receive an additional 40 cents at Goodrich, Uniroyal and Firestone. Past retirees get an additional \$1 per month per year of service. Chiropractic treatment coverage is improved.
- 1980 Pay increase of 35 cents per hour and COLA payments yield estimated 90 cents.
- 1981 Pay increase of 35 cents per hour and COLA payments yield estimated 97 cents. Workers at Oklahoma City plant organize after numerous attempts.
- 1982 Master contract negotiations in rubber industry bring about a combined 22.5% increase in wages pensions, health and medical benefits for life of the contract.
- 1982 Responding to economic trends, URW takes up the fight against foreign companies dumping products into the North American market. URW becomes heavily involved in trade and tariff issues.
- 1984 While maintaining the union-negotiated COLA system, the union helps with health care cost containment and protection of benefits first at Uniroyal and then Goodrich, Goodyear and Firestone.
- 1985 The URW pattern agreement yields an average \$1.89 plus \$.43 per hour raises, with major improvements in pension benefits, survivor benefits, and job security for union workers.
- 1986 The union increases work on detecting unsafe chemicals in the workplace, and minimizing worker exposure to it. Benzene is a particular target of URW agitation.
- 1987 Union health and safety work expands. The union calls for action plan to stop plant closing and outsourcing of North American industrial jobs. Union battles hostile corporate takeovers, and keeps pressure on non-union plants with organizing. Benzene standards are established by OSHA.
- 1988 Pension rates set at \$23.50 per month per years of service, company now matching 25% and 50% of employee's savings plan. Union successfully battles against "two-tiered" wage system and gains more personal days off for rubber workers. Life insurance increased, as well as Sickness & Accident pay. Improvements made spouse benefits, retiree health care insurance and vision care.
- 1991 Bridgestone/Firestone set the bargaining pattern for the other rubber and tire companies, with substantial benefits increases and contract language improvements. The union wins recognition at Bridgestone's new Warren County, Tennessee plant by card check recognition.
- 1994 Bridgestone/Firestone launches a bitter campaign against union workers in efforts to slash long-established collective bargaining gains. This struggle would become a cause throughout the labor movement to stop the overall corporate assault of North American workers and their standard of living.



- 1995 A special merger agreement with the United Steelworkers is ratified by delegates to the United Rubber Workers convention July 1. The merger rejuvenates efforts at Bridgestone Firestone.
- 1996 Bridgestone Firestone dispute settled. Workers gain 40 cents per hour wage hike, restoration of 11 holidays, triple-time pay for holiday work, \$750 signing bonus, supplemental bonuses of (\$500 to \$12,500 for returning strikers, three more plants (LaVergne, Warren Co. and Bloomington) brought into alignment with master bargaining structure. John Sellers takes over leadership of the USWA Rubber/Plastic Industry Conference on March 1.
- 2000 Union workers gain 20 cents per hour general wage increase, estimated to gain workers an extra \$2.30 per hour thorough 2003. COLA in place at all locations, pension increased to \$50 per month per years of service, improved company-paid family health care insurance at all plants, improved contracting out protections, \$500 lump sum payment.
- 2001 Wage increase of 20 cents per hour.
- 2002 Wage increase of 25 cents per hour.
- 2005 After an extended contract campaign, union workers fight back company demands for deep givebacks. Goodyear and BF Goodrich set the pattern eventually agreed to by Bridgestone Firestone, including pension hike to \$54 per year of credited service, 48 cents per hour added to COLA, job security and contracting-out protection improved. All USW contracts at BFS now expire at same time. Ron Hoover takes over leadership of the USW Rubber/Plastic Industry Conference.
- 2006 Additional 25 cents per hour added to COLA payment.