Between them this winning team has over 170 years of service to Cornell, Scott Adams, Dave VanDeMark, William Hildreth, Kelly Martin, Tim Kilpatrick, Lon Hildreth and Bruce Auchampaugh, Facilities Central Energy Plant’s Operations Manager and Sr. Plant Operators. Absent from this photo is Dave VanDeMark.

Large high pressure boilers, turbines, pumps and complex water treatment and digital control systems make up the Central Heating Plant, it has undergone a continuous evolution since its beginning in 1922. Its core is now two large jet engines burning a large volume of natural gas, co-generating electricity and steam. The Central Energy Plant must be operational, because a loss of service in the winter would cause immense property damage and loss of research assets and teaching functions. Both long-term planning and just-in-time troubleshooting is required to operate the plant.

Scott Adams is a 38 year veteran employee. He is a humble and extremely competent leader, always thinking and coming up with ways to increase safety, reliability, and efficiency. Scott leads by example, available 24-7 to do what it takes. The senior plant operator team members are: Dave Van De Mark, William Hildreth, Kelly Martin, Tim Kilpatrick and senior relief plant operators are Lon Hildreth and Bruce Auchampaugh. They have demonstrated dedication to Cornell by taking the helm of the CEP.

The CEP recently set a new record for days worked without a lost time accident – surpassing two years on April 17th!

The operation team is on-duty 24-7 year around: working 12 hour shifts, alternating all day then all night – 6 am to 6 pm or 6 pm to 6 am. In addition to the intense time commitment, it takes extensive training and experience to advance to a senior plant operator position. Often decisions must be made rapidly and proactively to keep the plant running. Equipment trips off, loads change rapidly, electric supply is interrupted, and all disruptions must be planned for and contingency operations implemented. The senior plant operations team always rises to the occasion with their steadfast, calm, and competent action.

An example of their teamwork and leadership:

On January 29th, 2014, on the coldest night of the year when the temperature dropped to minus 10 degrees Fahrenheit, at 5:45 am, the natural gas fuel supply to the CEP was lost when a valve maintained by NYSEG was impacted by the cold temperatures. Immediately steam supply to most of the campus was lost. The whole CEP staff rallied to help Scott and the senior plant operators (it occurred at the shift change so both Kelly Martin and Tim Kilpatrick were on duty). Steam loads within campus buildings were shed to lessen the demand, and throughout the morning the operators struggled to restore steam flow to campus as buildings began to cool. Many of the boilers were switched to liquid fuel oil and the restoration of the natural gas supply was undertaken. By noon full steam pressure was restored. Thanks to preparation and planning, plus quick response and intelligent action by all involved, led by the senior plant operators, there was no damage to research or assets on campus, and there was no interruption to the normal operation of the university.

This team was nominated by Bert Bland, Jim Adams, Chris Smalt, and Vicki Davis, pictured above with VP KyuJung Whang.