

NEWSLETTER
MONTANA STATE ELECTRICAL BOARD



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Prepared by Jason Steffins, Executive Officer

2016 Winter Edition



CURRENT BOARD MEMBERS

- Mel Medhus III, Electrician, President**
Kalispell MT Term 7/1/2015 to 7/1/2020
- John Gordon, Electrician, Vice President**
Butte MT Term 7/1/2013 to 7/1/2018
- Rick Hutchinson, Electrician**
Great Falls MT Term 7/1/2014 to 7/1/2019
- Keith Simendinger, Public Member**
Helena MT Term 7/1/2012 to 7/1/2017
- Dawn Achten, Public Member**
Billings MT Term 7/1/2011 to 7/1/2016

DEPARTMENT STAFF

- Jason Steffins – Executive Officer*
- Mark Jette – Board Counsel*
- Dick Marlow – Investigation Specialist*
- Peggy Schram – Investigation Specialist*
- Jeff Garden – Investigation Specialist*
- Teri Trask – Compliance*

2016 BOARD MEETING DATES

- JANUARY 7th - HELENA*
- MARCH 7th - HELENA*
- JULY 7th - HELENA*
- OCTOBER 6th – HELENA*

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Executive Officer Report – By Jason Steffins

Greetings everyone!

Well, it's been way too many years, but I finally found some time to get a newsletter out for everyone. I have been busy with running three boards (Electrical, Plumbers and Radiologic Technologists), but I am pleased to report that we should start to see a regular newsletter coming from the Montana State Electrical Board.

I have a few years of information to catch up on, but I will give you the highlights that I believe are important to you.

Current licensee numbers:

- 2338 Journeyman Electricians
- 1229 Master Electricians
- 49 Residential Electricians
- 919 Electrical Contractors

Legislation:

- **2011:** Tried for Unlicensed Practice Bill and revise electrician laws. Missed deadline for General Bill.
- **2013:** Tried for Unlicensed Practice Bill and Waiver of first citation fine if caught without license. Missed deadline, failed to move out of House.
- **2015:** Tried for Unlicensed Practice Bill: **Passed!** Also passing is the low voltage exemption of 90 volts or less, Apprentice and licensing provisions and Cite and Fine for first offense waived if the licensee can produce proof of a license in 5 days.

Re-Organization and New Database:

- Approximately 3 years ago, the Department was re-organized into Board Management and Licensing Bureaus. We believed that combining all the experts into these 2 groups would provide for better streamlining for boards and licensing experts, but also give us the ability to cross train more effectively. We also brought in the new eBiz system to help with online renewals and to get into the 21st century since our previous database was over 10 years old. Both have brought challenges and great success with many big advances still to come!!

Important dates and links:

- Renewals are due on July 1, 2016. Post cards will be mailed out sometime in May. Make sure to have your CE completed before this date.
- Address and email changes! This is critical for us to communicate with you! Please make sure we have your current ones on file. Visit www.electrician.mt.gov to get them updated.
- **If you're having problems with your ePass account, please contact our licensing unit at UnitA@mt.gov or 406-444-6880.**

Continuing Education



Each licensee will be responsible for acquiring 16 hours (8 per year) of continuing education for the licensing period of July 1, 2014 through July 1, 2016 of which at least half must be NEC update.

Please visit www.electrician.mt.gov to view the approved providers for the State of Montana. Only courses that are approved by the Montana State Electrical Board will be displayed. Courses taken in a reciprocal state must have that state's course approval number on the completion certificates and will not be listed in the hours of credit earned on the website.

COMPLIANCE REPORT

By Amber Carpenter, Investigations Supervisor

Inspectors and Investigators have completed seventeen electrical related investigations as well as 580 license checks in the last calendar year (December 2014 – November 2015). The breakdown of those checks for various licensure level is as follows:

Journeyman - 435

Master - 127

Residential – 18

Apprentice licenses are still required to be carried and checked by inspectors, although those numbers no longer reflect in our statistics. The Montana Registered Apprenticeship Program has taken over issuing identification cards for all apprentices in the program.

Two citations were issued to individuals who were not licensed in Montana or could not produce a valid license at the time of the license check. In the age of cell phones inspectors are accepting a picture of licenses saved on a cell phone in place of the actual license. The photograph on the cell phone must include the entire license and be legible.

We have just completed an enhancement to the licensing check database that will provide information to the Board about the location that the license checks are taking place. This will allow for a better comparison of where the work is occurring in the state and where the inspections are taking place and the ability to adjust the inspectors focus accordingly. Stay tuned for updates on this enhancement as the new data starts to come in over the next few months!

BUREAU OF BUILDING & MEASUREMENT STANDARDS By Dave Cook and Cliff Shultz

The Electrical Safety Section has compiled a list of the top ten compliance items found during rough-in and final electrical inspections by the Bureau's inspection personnel. Not in any particular order they are:

1. Work under the adopted 2014 National Electrical Code.
2. ARM 24.301.441 failing to contact inspector for final and Rough-in inspections.
3. ARM 24.301.441 failing to give inspector the required 48 hour notice to perform required inspections.
4. NEC 250.32(B): Equipment Grounding Conductors are required for all feeders including overhead feeders.
5. NEC 210.8 Ground-Fault Circuit-Interrupter Protection for Personnel. All ground-fault circuit-interrupter breaker and devices shall be installed in a readily accessible location.
6. NEC 338.12 Uses Not Permitted. (A) Service-Entrance Cable. Service-entrance cable (SE) and SER cable are not permitted to be installed underground.
4. NEC 210.12(A): Arc-Fault Circuit Interrupter Protection: All 15 and 20 amp, 120 volt branch circuits supplying outlets or devices in dwelling unit family rooms, dining rooms, living rooms, libraries, dens, bedrooms, sunrooms, recreation rooms, closets, hallways, kitchens, laundry areas or similar rooms shall be protected by a listed arc-fault interrupter.
5. NEC 406.12: Tamper-Resistant Receptacles: In all areas specified in 210.52, all 15 and 20 amp, 125 volt receptacles shall be listed tamper-resistant receptacles.
6. NEC 110.26 Maintaining working clearance in front of electrical equipment.
7. NEC 110.26 Keeping foreign piping and other equipment out of the "Dedicated Electrical Space"

The Electrical Safety Section continues to find these items to be the most written up compliance issues requiring installers to return to the project and fix the non-compliant issues, which is expensive and time consuming for both the installers and the inspection personnel. Any questions, comments, or suggestions you may

have for the Building Codes Bureau can be made by contacting Dave at 406-841-2053 or via email at dcook@mt.gov

Additionally, the Building Codes Bureau will also be hosting our 11th Annual Building Codes Education Conference which will take place March 28 – 31, 2016 in Bozeman at the Gran Tree Inn. More specific info on classes, days and times will soon be available via the website www.buildingcodes.mt.gov Please pass the word along to everyone and anyone needing continuing education credits, a thorough refresher, or simply an experience of great learning and networking with others in the industry. Among the classes will be a comprehensive refresher on the 2014 NFPA 70 National Electrical Code.

Multi-State Meeting... By Jason Steffins

This past August brought 16 states together for the annual NERA Multi-State Reciprocal meeting in Santa Fe, New Mexico. At this year's meeting, we discussed the possibility of working with NSCLA in providing a pool of questions from each state that could be used for examination development. We have more discussion ahead on this...so stay tuned!

The Alliance also worked on getting some uniformity across the states in regards to continuing education. Several states already allow CE to be taken in one State and then transfer the credits to another State. Hopefully, at future meetings, the Alliance will continue to work together to help the electricians utilize their CE in several if not all the reciprocal states. As for now, just make sure you still check with each state to see if your CE transfers over to additional licensed states.

Lastly, the Alliance is working diligently in promoting itself to other states. Communications have begun with trying to bring several other states into the Alliance. Next year we hope to see if Washington, Alabama, Wisconsin, Ohio and Massachusetts would have licensure standards that would allow for reciprocity and be included into NERA.

When the Alliance meets in Minnesota next year, we hope to further the discussions on expanding the industry to endorse reciprocity nationwide.

Administrators Corner... Mr. Todd Younkin

Greetings, Licensees and Board members. I've been in this position now for a little over a year, and it's been a daunting, but rewarding, learning period. I want to thank the Board for their continued honest and open dialogue, and their partnership in getting legislation passed during the 2015 Legislative Session. I also wanted to provide a heads up for the upcoming renewal process. As most of you are aware, the letters notifying you of the requirement to renew are at times helpful and confusing. So, you will be seeing a change during the 2016 renewal period. There will be no letters issued, instead, you will receive another type of communication (postcard and/or email) notifying you of the renewal requirement. Further information will be provided on our website, along with relevant quick links to information and the EBiz portal. Please bear with us, and we welcome any constructive feedback you may have as we roll this out.

Thanks!

Todd Younkin
Business Standards Division Administrator

