

Question of the Month

How long is the window for renewing an electrician's certificate without requiring the electrician to retake the examination?

Note from the Chief

Winter has arrived again and this is a good time for reminders about the importance of proper preparation and what to do in the event of damage to your electrical wiring. Wind, flooding, snow and ice will occur and with them, the likelihood of downed power lines and electrical outages. There is a great page on our website about dealing with [Floods & Other Natural Disasters](#).

Each year, we receive many questions about storm damage such as, how do I wire my generator? Installing a generator system is potentially one of the most dangerous types of electrical installations to your family, employees, and the utility's line workers. Legally and safely installing a generator system is very specialized work that requires expertise and experience. Prior to making a generator system purchase or installing a generator system, review the special edition *Electrical Currents* – [October 2007](#). All the information in the article is still relevant and accurate. L&I strongly encourages anyone interested in having a generator system installed at their home or business to work with a properly licensed electrical contractor. Before beginning the work, get written bids from two or three electrical contractors and verify that each has significant experience installing generator systems. Ask for references. Then make certain your contractor gets an electrical permit and has an inspection to verify that the work was done correctly and safely.

We have published several [Electrical Currents Newsletter](#) articles to help you prepare for the winter season. You can download all editions since January 2009 or the editions from 1998 through 2008. Use the search function and search for flood or generator.

What Questions Are Allowed To Be Answered By Electrical Inspectors

Electrical inspectors often face many different types of electrical installation questions from consumers, contractors, and electricians. [WAC 296-46B-010](#)(2) states, "Electrical inspectors will give information as to the interpretation or application of the standards in this chapter, but will not lay out work or act as consultants for contractors, owners, or users." There are a couple of reasons for this rule. L&I cannot take on the responsibility of an incorrect installation because an installer misunderstood the information that was provided. In addition, this ensures a level playing field for all competing in the electrical industry by placing limits on the types of questions an inspector may answer. It would not be ethical for one contractor to win a bid over another because of consultation given by a L&I inspector.

Many people call to ask if they "can just run something by" the inspector. Inspectors are not allowed to enter into discussions about project bidding or design or other "what if" scenarios. It is not the inspector's role to make recommendations between design or installation options for the installer. The installer is responsible for the entire decision making process from bidding, to permit fees, to installation.

An inspector or supervisor can answer a specific question about a code interpretation or corrections you have been issued.

Safety Tip of the Month!

Be safe be seen. Daylight is very limited this time of the year. High visibility is your best bet for safe working or outdoor activities in low light conditions. Always wear reflective clothing or accessories so that others can see you. Wearing reflective clothing reduces the possibility of injury from a motor vehicle or other mobile equipment.

WAC Rule Revision Update

In Tacoma on December 19, the department met with the Technical Advisory Committee (TAC). After a long day with a “working” lunch and a few short breaks, every rule change proposal was addressed. The proposals were discussed and some modified prior to the TAC taking an advisory vote on each. We will soon compile all proposals to be presented to the Electrical Board into one document and post them on the [Rule Development](#) page of our website. On January 30, 2014, during their [regular meeting](#), the [Electrical Board](#) will consider the results of the TAC meeting and make recommendations on rule change proposals. Soon thereafter, the department will publish a final draft of the proposed rules.

On April 10, 2014, there will be a public hearing on the proposed rules at 1 p.m. at: [Department of Labor & Industries](#), Room S119, 7273 Linderson Way SW, Tumwater, WA 98501.

Electrical Equipment Must Meet Manufacturing Safety Standards

[RCW 19.28.010](#) requires all materials, devices, appliances, and equipment under the jurisdiction of the electrical law to be “of a type that conforms to applicable standards or be indicated as acceptable by the established standards of any electrical product testing laboratory which is accredited by the department.” The requirement that electrical equipment be manufactured to appropriate safety standards has been in Washington Law for over forty years. OSHA and most states have similar requirements. There are many quality manufacturing firms that get their products certified (and identified, marked, or labeled) by third-party product testing laboratories and safety standards experts. However, there are product manufacturers willing to sell untested electrical products to unsuspecting and uninformed customers. This questionable business practice may give additional profit and competitive advantage to the manufacturer, but it unfairly places the burden of proof of electrical safety on the consumer or end user.

The electrical contractor and installer should make their customers aware of these requirements as early as possible in the design and planning stage of a project. Preventing the purchase of equipment that is not tested or evaluated for electrical safety can prevent costly delays at the end of the project.

Permit Fees - Temporary Connection of a Load Bank

The recent rulemaking activity allowing nonresidential maintenance 07 specialty contractors and 07 specialty electricians to make temporary electrical connections for the purpose of load testing electrical systems has created questions on permit fees.

When in L&I’s jurisdiction, the fees are based on the temporary services fees found in [WAC 296-46B-906\(3\)](#). For example, the permit fee for temporarily connecting a load bank to a 600 amp system will be the same as the permit fee for a 600 amp temporary service/feeder, or currently \$121.10. A permit from a city jurisdiction is required to be obtained prior to performing the same electrical work within cities that have their own electrical inspection program.

Ugly Installations: 2008 NEC 408.41 - Each grounded conductor shall terminate within the panelboard in an individual terminal that is not also used for another conductor. In addition, most panelboard manufactures make this very clear in the panelboard installation instructions.

Answer to Question of the Month: 181 days – An electrician’s certificate can be renewed ninety days prior and ninety days after the expiration date. Renewing after the expiration date will cause the renewal fee to double. Waiting more than ninety days after the expiration date requires reexamination. Save the time and money, renew online [here](#).



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