



Questions and Answers about Electrical Safety

In Washington State, those who perform electrical installations must meet certain training and certification/licensing requirements. The law also requires electrical permits before work begins and inspections before the work can be approved. These steps encourage quality work and consistent application of electrical laws and codes. The following questions and answers further explain requirements that promote electrical safety and protect people and property.

Qualifications

What is the difference between a licensed electrical contractor, certified electrician and a trainee?

- A licensed electrical contractor is a business entity legally licensed to perform electrical installations. In order to conduct business or perform electrical installations, an electrical contractor must have a:
 - Bond
 - Master Business License
 - Certified electrical administrator/master electrician
 - Industrial insurance (worker's compensation) account, unless the business has no employees
 - Certified journeyman or specialty electrician (at least one)
- A certified electrician is a person who holds a State of Washington electrician certificate, which qualifies that person to make electrical installations. An electrician cannot perform the functions of a licensed electrical contractor unless he/she is a licensed electrical contractor.
- An electrical trainee is a person who is learning to be an electrician. A trainee must be supervised by an electrician on every job site.

Do I need to hire an electrical contractor to do my electrical work?

- You may do the work yourself if you are the property owner unless the electrical work involves construction of a new building you intend to rent, sell or lease.

- You may also hire an electrical contractor to do the electrical work. Remember, an electrician is not a contractor. Contracting is restricted to licensed electrical contractors who then hire the electricians to do the actual work.
- If you hire an electrical contractor, be sure he or she is properly licensed. To check your contractor's license and whether that contractor has previous violations, go to www.ElectricalBasics.Lni.wa.gov.

Permits

What electrical work requires an electrical permit?

An electrical permit is required for all electrical installations or alterations, including maintenance work, except for travel trailers; plug-in appliances; like-in-kind replacement of circuit breakers, fuses, lamps, snap switches, receptacle outlets, household appliances (in exact same location with no wiring changes), heating elements, light fixture ballasts; like-in-kind replacement of thermostats (not the wiring), contactors, relays, timers, motor starters, motors 10 H.P. or smaller and similar control components; and heat cable repair.

Is an electrical permit required before I start my electrical work?

Yes. An electrical permit must be purchased and posted at the job site prior to any electrical work, except in the case of unforeseen emergency work. In such cases, an electrical permit must be purchased on the next business day.

I hired an electrical contractor to do part of the electrical work, and I plan to do part of the work myself. Who purchases the electrical permit?

The electrical contractor must purchase an electrical permit for his/her part of the electrical work and you must purchase an electrical permit for any work you are doing.

Where do I get a permit?

Buy your permit online using a credit card at www.ElectricalPermitsInspections.Lni.wa.gov or purchase it at any L&I office.

Inspections

When do I call for my electrical inspection?

Requests for inspection must be made no later than three business days after completing the electrical installation, one business day after any part of the electrical installation has been energized, or before the installation is covered, whichever occurs first.

To request an electrical inspection online, go to www.ElectricalPermitsInspections.Lni.wa.gov.

Do I have to leave my electrical job open for the inspector?

Yes. Nothing can be covered or concealed until it has been approved by the electrical inspector. All electrical work must be open for visual inspection.

How do I get in touch with an electrical inspector?

Electrical inspectors are in the office available for phone calls or over-the-counter questions from 8 to 8:30 a.m., Monday through Friday (except state holidays).

When will I get my inspection?

- Requests made online before midnight will be available to the inspector the next morning.
- You may also call any L&I office to request an inspection, but this may delay your request.
- Because of changing workloads, the response time for an inspection may vary. Most inspections are performed within one working day after the request is received.

- If any special arrangements are needed, you must contact your inspector between the hours of 8 and 8:30 a.m. prior to the inspection. Special arrangements could include access to the site when no one is present, request for specific inspection days or times, or other needed arrangements.
- Inspectors will not enter any work site when minors are present, unless the owner or the owner's adult representative is present.
- The electrical inspector may make an appointment, depending upon daily workload. Keep in mind that appointments may be made for morning or afternoon only during working hours. Inspectors are not able to set specific times for inspection.

Do I need a mobile home placement permit, issued by the local building authority, posted on my job site?

Yes. The electrical inspector cannot approve the electrical installation or connection of a mobile home unless proof of a current building permit issued by the local government agency authorized to issue such permits is posted on the job site.



For more information

📄 **On the Web:** L&I's Electrical Program
www.ElectricalProgram.Lni.wa.gov

L&I Offices: www.Offices.Lni.wa.gov

Other formats for persons with disabilities are available on request. Call 1-800-547-8367. TDD users, call 360-902-5797. L&I is an equal opportunity employer.