A Newsletter from L&I Chief Electrical Inspector Randy Barnes *October/November 2026*

ELECTRICAL CURRENTS

Washington State Department of Labor & Industries

Question of the Month –

You are designing an electrical installation for a project near an ocean shoreline, where an enclosure will be exposed to corrosive conditions and may also be subject to prolonged submersion. To ensure the enclosure is suitable for this environment, what is the correct enclosure type?

Safety Tip of the Month

Prepare for worsening driving conditions in the coming months, including rain, fog, ice, and snow. Reduce your speed and allow more following distance to account for limited traction and visibility. Check that your windshield wipers work properly and that the washer-fluid reservoir is full. For more winter-driving guidance, visit the Winter Travel page on the Washington State Department of Transportation website

Understanding NFPA TIAs: Delay Extended for HVAC GFCI Protection Requirements

Every three years, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) publishes the National Electrical Code (NEC). When urgent issues arise between editions, the NFPA uses a shortcut called a Tentative Interim Amendment (TIA).

A TIA is an emergency change to the code. To pass, a TIA must prove that waiting for the next code edition would cause a serious problem, like a major technical conflict or a safety hazard. Once a TIA is submitted, a committee reviews it, the public gets to comment, and experts vote. If three-quarters of the committee agrees, the TIA takes effect immediately.

A perfect example of this process is the recent passage of NEC Proposed TIA No. 1924.

Under previous editions of the NEC, outdoor HVAC equipment was exempt from Ground-Fault Circuit-Interrupter (GFCI) protection requirements. This exemption was scheduled to expire on September 1, 2026. However, manufacturers and industry needed more time to solve compatibility issues and stop breakers from accidentally tripping.

Because of this looming emergency, TIA No. 1924 was proposed to change the expiration date of the exemption. The NEC Correlating Committee officially voted to pass the TIA which effectively delays GFCI requirements for outdoor HVAC equipment until September 1, 2028. This illustrates how the TIA process and industry input can be used to address technical issues identified after a code cycle is published.

Rulemaking Update

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) has adopted new electrical rules for EV charging equipment and competency exams. The changes apply to Chapter 296-46B WAC and take effect November 20, 2026.

The new rules implement requirements from SSB 5528. Electricians who perform electrical work on EV charging equipment for public works projects must be certified through the Electric Vehicle Infrastructure Training Program (EVITP) or a similar nationally recognized program approved by L&I.

The certification requirement applies only to electrical installation and maintenance work. Some apprentices are exempt when supervised by a certified journey-level electrician. Projects under contract before January 1, 2026, are also exempt.

L&I also updated the rules to simplify electrician and administrator competency examination requirements.

2026 National Electrical Code Amendments

L&I is proposing amendments to the electrical rules in Chapter 296-46B WAC and to the 2026 National Electrical Code (NEC) as adopted in Washington. The purpose of this rulemaking is to review proposed state amendments, update and clarify existing requirements, and make housekeeping and other necessary changes. If adopted, the final rules (CR-103) are expected to be filed with the Office of the Code Reviser on November 17.

L&I reviews and updates the state's electrical rules every three years to help ensure consistency with national electrical safety standards and industry practices. The 2026 NEC will replace the current 2023 NEC on December 31, 2026.

Don't Be an Absentee Administrator or Master Electrician

If the designated administrator or master electrician is not a member of the firm, they must be a full-time employee. An absentee is someone that is not a member of the firm or a full-time supervisory employee.

Under RCW 19.28.061, the administrator or master electrician must be a member of the firm or a full-time supervisory employee. This person must be available during work hours to carry out the duties of the job. WAC 296-46B-930 explains what "member of the firm" and "full-time supervisory employee" mean.

If they are not a member of the firm, they must be on the contractor's full-time payroll, receive regular pay similar to other employees, oversee the contractor's work, be available during normal business hours, and perform the duties listed under RCW 19.28.061(5).

Penalties for absentee administrators or master electricians begin at $1,000. Contractors also face monetary penalties if they have a designated absentee administrator or master electrician.

Answer to the Question of the month:

Type 6P – NEC® 110.28 and Table 110.28 must be used for selecting enclosures for use in specific locations other than hazardous (classified) locations. For more information, refer to this helpful enclosure types publication from the National Electrical Manufacturers Association (NEMA).

Picture of the Month:

The property owner that made this installation may not have been familiar with tools and methods used for heating and bending PVC conduit. Besides the obvious, what would you change if you were the one correcting the installation?

