

Electrical Examining Board

ISSUE

The Electrical Examining Board is responsible for overseeing the licensing, permitting, inspecting, and continuing education requirements of the statewide Electrician and Electrical Contractor Program in Iowa. This *Issue Review* provides a summary of the Program and a review of the current situation.

AFFECTED AGENCIES

Department of Public Safety, political subdivisions

CODE AUTHORITY

Code Chapter 103

Administrative Code 661 – Chapters 500-504, 550-553, and 559

BACKGROUND

During the 2007 Legislative Session, HF 897 (Electrician Licensure Act) created a statewide system of licensure and certification for electricians and electrical contractors. For administrative purposes, the Electrical Examining Board was attached to the Fire Marshal Division in the Department of Public Safety (DPS).

The Electrician Program is governed by an 11-member Electrical Examining Board appointed by the Governor. Board members consist of the following:

- Two journeymen electricians (one union member and one nonunion member).
- Two members that are master electricians or electrical contractors (one union member and one nonunion member).
- One electrical inspector.
- Two members representing the general public (one union member and one nonunion member).
- The State Fire Marshal (or a designated representative from the Fire Marshal Division).
- One local building official employed by a political subdivision to perform electrical inspections for that subdivision.
- A representative of a public utility.
- One licensed professional engineer with a background in electrical engineering.

The provisions of the law requiring licensing of electricians and electrical contractors took effect on January 1, 2008. Most licenses are issued for three years; however, licenses for the

categories of Apprentice and Unclassified are issued annually. License fees are prorated by the month for applications made mid-cycle.

The provisions of the law requiring inspections took effect March 1, 2009. After December 31, 2013, a political subdivision may choose to discontinue performing its own inspections and permit the Electrical Examining Board to have jurisdiction over inspections. As of July 15, 2010, there are 180 political subdivisions performing their own inspections out of a total of 1,113.

All licensing and permitting fees are deposited in the Electrician and Installer Licensing and Inspection Fund and made available to the Board, in consultation with the Fire Marshal's Office. The balance does not revert to the General Fund.

CURRENT SITUATION

Examination

House File 897 permitted the Board to choose between developing and administering their own electrical license exam or utilizing a testing service. The Board chose to utilize Prometric, a testing service provider. As of July 15, 2010, a total of 925 applicants have received sponsorship by the Electrical Examining Board to take the Prometric examination and 542 have completed the exam. The sponsorship is good for 180 days or two attempts. An examination is required for those that obtain a new Class A license or for those that let their original license expire.

The Board adopted a resolution stating the intent to accept licenses that were issued by a local jurisdiction based on a score of 75 or above on a supervised examination offered by Prometric, Thompson Prometric, or their predecessors. Persons applying for a State license under the terms of the resolution are also required to meet other criteria such as years of experience and the payment of licensing fees. The following website provides a complete listing of cities and license types: <http://www.dps.state.ia.us/fm/electrician/examinations/cityexams.shtml>.

The Board signed a reciprocity agreement with South Dakota on May 20, 2010 and is in the process of establishing reciprocity with Minnesota and Nebraska. The Board may grant licenses, without examination, of the same grade and class to an electrician that has been licensed with another state for at least one year. The applicant must furnish proof that the qualifications they possess are equal to the qualifications of holders of similar licenses in Iowa. The Board has also applied to become a member of the Multi-State Group Agreement, a group that specifies the minimum requirements to be met for each state rather than setting up individual reciprocity agreements on a state by state basis. A decision on whether Iowa will be allowed to join the Multi-State Group will occur at the meeting on August 2nd and 3rd.

Licensing

Since the statewide licensing program began on January 1, 2008, a total of 14,598 licenses have been issued. The following chart shows the total active licenses in Iowa, the duration of the licenses, and the fee amounts.

Electrical License Summary

(As of July 15, 2010)

Type	Total Active Licenses	Duration	Fee
Master A	1,681	3 years	\$375
Master B	1,880	3 years	\$375
Journeyman A	3,675	3 years	\$75
Journeyman B	1,559	3 years	\$75
Contractor	2,057	3 years	\$375
Special			
Residential	773	3 years	\$75
Signs	109	3 years	\$75
Air Conditioner disconnect/reconnect	1,832	3 years	\$75
Irrigation systems	83	3 years	\$75
Unclassified	264	1 year	\$20
Apprentice	685	1 year	\$20
	14,598		

Source: Department of Public Safety

All licenses will expire on December 31, 2010. Upon completion of 18 hours of continuing education, a license can be renewed. For the next round of licenses (2011-2013), there will be three additional license categories added to the list above that will take effect beginning January 2011. They include an Inactive Master License, Residential Electrician, and Residential Contractor.

There are currently four clerks and one temporary person in the DPS to process license renewals. With the hiring freeze implemented by the Department of Management (DOM) effective December 12, 2008, the Board will need DOM approval to hire part-time help to assist with licensing.

The Board is in the process of addressing how to handle the large amount of expiring licenses with minimal staff.

Inspections

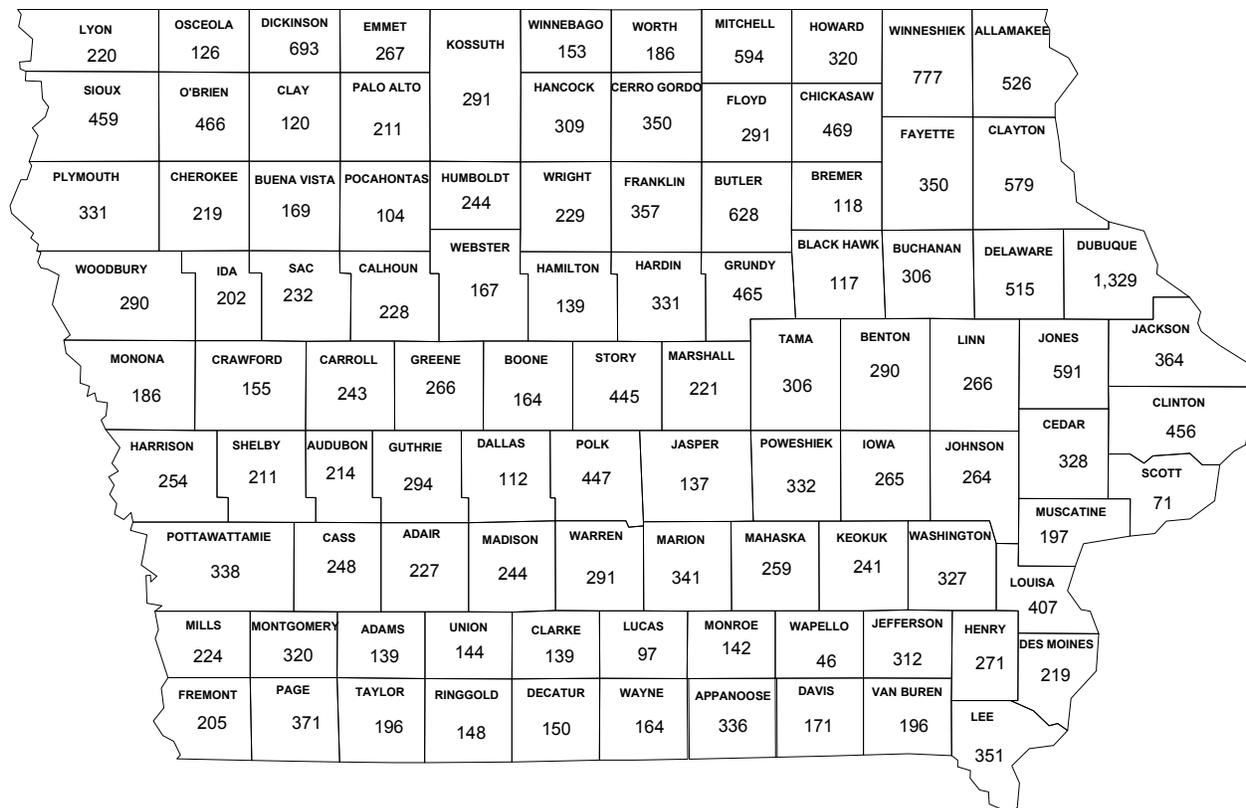
Since the statewide inspection program began on March 1, 2009, a total of 25,474 inspections have been requested and 25,257 inspections (99.1%) have been completed as of July 15, 2010. The Program is averaging 1,700 new inspections per month. The total number of permits issued since the Program began in March 1, 2009, is 21,162 and 17,213 permits (81.3%) have been closed as of July 15, 2010. The program is averaging 1,400 new permits per month. The number of inspections is larger than the number of permits due to the fact that one permit can have many inspection requests. Permits are closed after all the inspections and re-inspections required for the permit have been completed. In addition, property owners can request an inspection if there is a concern regarding their electrical system; however, this is not required by law. As of July 15, 2010, a total of 216 inspections of this nature have been completed.

Electrical permits are required for all new electrical installations including, residential, commercial, and industrial (except routine maintenance) in all areas of the State that are not currently under the jurisdiction of a political subdivision that performs electrical inspections. Permits are also required for work on all existing electrical installations (except routine maintenance) unless the work is done under the "small jobs exemption." The "small jobs

exemption” requires work to be performed under the direct supervision of a licensed electrician; prohibits work within a new or existing switchboard or panel board; specifies the line to ground installation cannot exceed 30 amperes; and the line to ground installation cannot exceed 277 volts per single phase. Electrical permits are not required for routine maintenance defined as “the repair or replacement of an existing electrical apparatus or equipment, including, but not limited to, wires, cables, switches, receptacles, outlets, fuses, circuit breakers, and fixtures of the same size and type for which no changes in wiring are made, but does not include any new electrical installation or the expansion of any circuit.”

There are currently 16 full-time inspectors and four supervisors each working 40 hours per week. Four additional temporary part-time staff have been approved to address the seasonal workload. Territories were redrawn into 16 districts earlier this year in an attempt to reduce overtime. The following website lists the inspection districts and name and phone number of each inspector: https://iowaelectrical.gov/app/webroot/docs/electrical_inspectors.jpg. The northeast part of the State has the majority of the inspections followed by the northwest and southeast. The following map shows 28,820 inspections by county:

State Inspections by County
March 1, 2009 – July 15, 2010



Note: The information on the map was gathered manually by county and will not equal the total inspections completed.

BUDGET IMPACT

The following chart shows the revenues and expenditures received through the Electrician and Installers Licensing and Inspection Fund.

Electrician and Installers Licensing and Inspection Fund

(As of June 30, 2010)

	Actual FY 2008	Actual FY 2009	Year to Date Actual FY 2010
Revenues	\$ 1,390,670	\$1,626,118	\$ 2,082,688
Interest	19,383	34,344	9,659
Balance Brought Forward	0	1,292,164	1,263,515
Total	\$ 1,410,053	\$2,952,626	\$ 3,355,862
Expenditures	\$ 117,888	\$1,689,112	\$ 2,524,431
Total	\$ 1,292,165	\$1,263,514	\$ 831,431
FTE Positions	2.59	15.25	33.00
Totals may not add due to rounding			
Source: 1/3 System			

As of July 1, 2010, the Department of Public Safety changed how the fees are deposited in the Electrician and Installers Licensing and Inspection Fund. Licensing fees are deposited under a separate revenue source code than the inspection fees. This will allow for better tracking of the revenue and better monitoring of the current fee structures for both programs.

Fees can be adjusted through Administrative Rule within the bounds of statutory limits provided in Code Chapter 103. Based on the current number of licenses and the fee structure, the license renewal process should generate approximately \$2.7 million in revenue. This will be reflected in the second half of FY 2011. However, approximately 2,200 currently licensed electricians have not completed any of the 18 required continuing education requirements. This would impact the Program by approximately \$825,000. Under the current structure, the revenue for the licensing program is received during the first year of a three-year cycle.

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