
Commerce & Labor Committee

ESB 6630

Brief Description: Providing for certification as a master electrician.

Sponsors: Senators Prentice, Honeyford, Rasmussen and Sheahan.

Brief Summary of Engrossed Bill

- Establishes new certifications for master electricians.
- Allows electrical contractors to designate master electricians as their administrators.
- Modifies work experience requirements and technical or trade school program allowances applicable to specialty electricians.
- Modifies ratio requirements and jobsite requirements applicable to noncertified persons.
- Modifies the definition of "equipment" to exclude all plug-in appliances and certain equipment to be determined by the Department of Labor and Industries.

Hearing Date: 2/25/02

Staff: Jill Reinmuth (786-7134).

Background:

The Department of Labor and Industries administers electrical contracting and certification laws. The Electrical Board advises the department director on matters pertaining to enforcement of these laws, including installation standards, inspection procedures, and rulemaking.

An entity in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or installing or maintaining equipment to be operated by electric current, must be licensed as an electrical contractor by the department. An entity may be licensed as a general electrical contractor or as a specialty electrical contractor.

An electrical administrator ensures that: electrical work complies with electrical installation laws and rules; electrical safety procedures are used; required labels, permits, and licenses

are used; and corrective notices are complied with.

A person who installs or maintains electrical wires and equipment that are used for light, heat, or power must be certified as an electrician by the department.

A noncertified person who works in the electrical construction must obtain a training certificate from the department.

Electrical Contractors: One licensing requirement for electrical contractors is that an electrical administrator be designated as the contractor's administrator.

Electrical Administrators: An administrator's certificate is valid for two years. An administrator may renew his or her certificate without examination.

Journeyman Electricians: To take the journeyman electrician exam, a person must have worked in the electrical construction trade for four years, or successfully completed a state-approved apprenticeship program in the trade. An applicant who has successfully completed a two-year technical or trade school program in the electrical construction trade may substitute up to two years of the program for two years of work experience.

Specialty Electricians: To take a specialty electrician exam, a person must have worked in that specialty for two years, or successfully completed a state-approved apprenticeship program in that specialty. Years of a technical or trade school program may not be substituted for years of work experience.

Noncertified Persons: An appropriate certified person must supervise a noncertified person. The certified person must be on the same job site as the noncertified person at least 75 percent of each working day. A journeyman electrician may supervise one noncertified person, or up to four noncertified persons enrolled in a technical or trade school program. A specialty electrician may supervise up to two noncertified persons.

Other:

The definition of "equipment" includes equipment that uses, conducts, or is operated by electricity, but excludes plug-in household appliances.

Electrical specialties include, but are not limited to: residential, domestic appliances, pump and irrigation, limited energy system, signs, and nonresidential maintenance. The department may create additional electrical specialties.

A noncertified person must renew his or her training certificate annually.

The department may revoke a certificate because: error or fraud in obtaining the certificate, incompetence in the trade, or violations of electrical contracting and certification laws or rules.

Summary of Bill:

Various provisions applicable to electrical contractors, certified persons (including electrical administrators, master electricians, journeyman electricians, and specialty electricians), and noncertified persons are modified.

Electrical Contractors: An electrical contractor may designate either a master electrician or an electrical administrator (instead of only an administrator) to be the contractor's administrator. An electrical contractor must notify the department in writing within 10 days if the master electrician or the electrical administrator dies or becomes incapacitated.

Electrical Administrators: An administrator's certificate is valid for three years (instead of two years). An administrator may renew his or her certificate without examination only if the administrator completes an annual eight-hour continuing education course. The department must assess fees for issuance and renewal of administrators' certificates, and must set the fees by rule. The fees must cover, but not exceed, the costs of issuing certificates and of administering and enforcing certification requirements.

Master Electricians: New certifications for master journeyman electricians and master specialty electricians are created.

Qualifications to take examinations to be certified are established. To take the master journeyman electrician exam, a person must have had a journeyman electrician certificate for four years. To take the master specialty electrician exam, a person must have had a specialty electrician certificate for two years. Like the electrical administrator exam, the master electrician exams must include questions about safety, the state electrical code, and electrical theory.

Qualifications to apply to be certified without examination are also established. Before July 1, 2005, to apply to be a master journeyman electrician, a person must have been certified as a general administrator and a journeyman electrician for four years. To apply to be a master specialty electrician, a person must have been certified as a specialty administrator and a specialty electrician for two years.

Journeyman Electricians: Work experience requirements for the journeyman electrician exam are expressed in hours (instead of years). For example, a person is required to have 8,000 hours of work experience (instead of four years). The provision allowing two years of a technical or trade school program to be substituted for two years of work experience is not changed. Specialty electricians with work experience requirements of less than 4,000 hours cannot credit those hours towards qualifying to become a journeyman electrician.

Specialty Electricians: Work experience requirements for specialty electrician exams are modified as follows.

For certain specialties, work experience requirements are expressed in hours (instead of years). For example, a person is required to have 4,000 hours of work experience (instead of two years). (These specialties are: residential; pump and irrigation; sign; limited energy, and nonresidential maintenance.) For other specialties, 2,000 hours of work experience are required.

A provision allowing years of a technical or trade school program to be substituted for years

of work experience is added. A person who, after January 1, 2000, has successfully completed a two-year program in the electrical construction trade may substitute up to one year of the program for one year of work experience.

The department must use specified criteria to determine whether hours in a technical or trade school program may be substituted for hours of work experience. For example, a two-year technical or trade school program must consist of 3,000 or more hours of student/instructor contact, of which at least 2,400 hours must be related to a particular specialty. External intern programs may be work experience, but are not student/instructor contact.

Noncertified Persons: The requirements for ratios of certified electricians to noncertified persons and supervision of noncertified persons on the jobsite are modified as follows.

For a noncertified person working as a journeyman electrician, the ratios are not changed, but the jobsite requirements are eliminated.

For a noncertified person working as any type of specialty electrician, the ratios are changed. A certified electrician may supervise up to two noncertified persons or four noncertified persons enrolled in a technical or trade school program (instead of only two noncertified persons).

For a noncertified person working as a certain type of specialty electrician, the ratio determines the jobsite requirement. (These specialties are: residential; pump and irrigation; sign; limited energy, and nonresidential maintenance.) If the ratio is 1:1 or 1:2, the jobsite requirement is not changed. If the ratio is 1:3 or 1:4, however, a certified electrician must directly supervise and instruct the noncertified persons, and be on the same job site 100 percent of each working day. The certified electrician may not make or engage in electrical installation.

For a noncertified person working as another type of specialty electrician, the jobsite requirements are changed. During an initial 90-day period, a certified electrician must supervise the noncertified persons 100 percent of each working day. (The department, by rule, may make the initial period longer.) After the initial period, if the noncertified person takes and passes the specialty examination, he or she may work without supervision.

Other:

Definitions of "master electrician," "master journeyman electrician," and "master specialty electrician" are added.

The definition of "equipment" is modified to exclude all plug-in appliances (instead of excluding only plug-in household appliances). It also excludes equipment as determined by the department by rule.

The "domestic appliances" specialty is eliminated.

Training certificates must be renewed biennially (instead of annually).

Grounds for revoking certificates are broadened to include violations that present imminent danger to the public or property. If a previous certificate was revoked, the department may deny an application for certification for up to two years.

Rules Authority: The bill does not contain provisions addressing the rule-making powers of an agency.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: A fiscal note for SB 6630 is available. A fiscal note for ESB 6630 has been requested.

Effective Date: Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.