

JANUARY 2008

MEMBERS ACKNOWLEDGED FOR SERVICE

The Electrical Contractors' Association of City of Chicago (ECA) Executive Committee bid farewell to two members who have completed their exemplary service with the Committee. Noreen Ferentz, Wright Electric Company, Inc. and Michael Walsdorf, Advent Systems, Inc. were each presented with a Special Recognition Gavel Plaque at the December 5, 2007 Executive Committee Meeting.

Ms. Ferentz was an Executive Committee member for the years 2004 through 2007. Mr. Walsdorf was an Executive Committee member for the years 1996 through 2007. Both served the Committee admirably. Each remain active with Association activities. The ECA Executive Committee recognizes their efforts and thanks Noreen and Mike for their years of dedicated service and participation with the Association.



Pictured from left to right are:
Noreen Ferentz, Wright Electric Company, Inc. and
Michael Walsdorf, Advent Systems, Inc.

LMCC/CHICAGO CODE SEMINAR

On December 11, 2007, the Labor Management Committee of Chicago (LMCC/Chicago) sponsored a unique electrical code seminar that was open to all Electrical Inspectors throughout Cook County, Illinois. The program highlighted the Chicago Electrical Code (CEC) and the National Electrical Code (NEC) and their impact on the 138 municipalities of Cook County. Harry Ohde, INTECH Instructor and Timothy Arendt, Shamrock Electric Company, Inc., were the facilitators. The purpose of the presentations was to promote a uniform electrical code in Cook County and allow those who work in the Inspection Departments of the many municipalities to share new information to be able to provide better service to their respective communities. This successful program is to continue in January 2008 at the INTECH campus in Alsip. Hopefully, this will spark dialogue among the municipalities to promote uniformity with the electrical code. We commend the efforts of the LMCC/Chicago, INTECH, as well as all of the participants of this program.

Electrical Contractors' Association of Chicago and Cook County

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COMED ACHIEVES SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS TO NEW SERVICE REQUESTS

Call waits and contract approval times drop; Customer Satisfaction scores climb.

ComEd has invested heavily this year [2007] to improve service to customers seeking a new electrical connection or a change in service, and homebuilders, commercial developers and independent electricians are already reporting speedier order completion and improved customer service.

Among the most visible changes aiding customers are a new customer Web site, www.exeloncorp.com/ComEd/NewBusiness, and a near-doubling of the number of customer representatives to answer customer calls promptly. In addition, new mobile technology in the form of wireless laptops and printers enable field representatives to produce contracts and accept payments on-site, slashing contract processing times. As one example, the average approval time for a Residential Underground Agreement has dropped by 60 percent from 22 to 9 days.

“Improving customer service is our highest priority,” said Kevin Brookins, ComEd VP of Work Management & New Business. “Because many of the changes are happening behind the scenes, we expected some lag before the upgrades were reflected in our New Business customer satisfaction rate. However, from January to August, our scores rose from 65 percent to 76 percent. Our ultimate goal is a 90 percent approval rating, but it is good that customers already see significant improvement.”

This improvement parallels a steep decline in the number of customer complaints to the Illinois Commerce Commission and ComEd executives. Through the end of July, ComEd is experiencing a 43 percent decrease as compared to 2006.

Part of the credit goes to a dramatic reduction in wait times when customers call the New Business Hotline, 866-NEW-ELEC (866-639-3532). The number of customer call reps staffing this line has nearly doubled, and the percentage of calls answered within 30 seconds jumped from 11 percent in 2006 to 87 percent in August.

This performance could further improve as more customers take advantage of the enhanced website launched in June. The ComEd New Business Services site educates customers, answers basic questions, and is expected to reduce general calls made to the New Business Hotline. Customers can now print and submit service applications electronically, find the requirements for different types of service requests, and review general project timelines. Since June, more than 12,000 visits have been recorded.

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COMED ACHIEVES SIGNIFICANT IMPROVEMENTS TO NEW SERVICE REQUESTS

“The decline in new-home starts around the region has somewhat reduced our call volume, but the reality is that electrical demand in our service territory still grows nearly 2 percent per year,” Brookins said. “In fact, six of the 25 counties in ComEd’s service territory are among the 100 fastest-growing counties in the U.S. by either percentage or overall population increase.”

According to U.S. Census Bureau figures from 2000 to 2006, these six Illinois counties are:

- Kendall County, with the 2nd highest percentage growth (66.7 percent)
- Will County, 10th highest overall population increase (165,950 new residents)
- Kane County, 40th highest overall population increase (89,613 new residents)
- Lake County, 52nd highest overall population increase (68,490 new residents)
- McHenry County, 79th highest overall population increase (52,280 new residents)
- Boone County, with the 86th highest percentage growth (26 percent)

ComEd New Business Director David Perez has been leading the overall improvement effort. He noted that one of the most important behind-the-scenes process changes was revamping how ComEd measures the time taken to complete a service connection. Previously, the clock began when ComEd’s construction department received the order. Now the clock starts once customers meet all requirements and submit their order.

“This may seem like a minor technical change, but it’s an important one to us. It systematically reinforces the point that any measurement of success must reflect our customer’s perspective. If the customer isn’t satisfied, then we need to further streamline our approach to order completion,” Perez said.

For this reason, Brookins, Perez and their team have also met with dozens of key customers for one-on-one meetings to discover additional gaps for improving service to customers.

For more information, contact ComEd’s New Business Hotline, 866-NEW-ELEC (866-639-3532) or visit www.exeloncorp.com/ComEd/NewBusiness

This article was reprinted by permission from the ComEd News Release -October 3, 2007 issue.

OSHA ANNOUNCES EMPLOYER-PAID PPE FINAL RULE

On November 17, 2007, the Department of Labor's Occupational Health and Safety Administration (OSHA) published the Employer Payment for Personal Protective Equipment; Final Rule (29 CFR Parts 1910, 1915, 1917, 1918, and 1926). The final rule requires employers to pay for almost all personal protective equipment (PPE) that is required by OSHA standards. The rule officially goes into effect as of February 13, 2008, but OSHA will not begin to enforce it until May 15, 2008. It is likely that most NECA-member contractors are already in compliance with most aspects of it.

The 90-page, fine-print document addresses a number of public comments and concerns and clarifies exceptions to the rule. Comments cited include those of the National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA), who listed a number of items that potentially could be considered PPE, such as climbing hooks and flame-resistant (FR) clothing, "vary in design and material, have always been very much subject to personal preference, and are not universally transferable from employee to employee," and, therefore, should not be subject to the provisions of the Rule. OSHA responded to this and other like-minded comments saying that this equipment is subject to employer payment when required by OSHA standards.

Several items are made clear with OSHA's language. For example, specific items exempted are listed, and include:

- Non-specialty safety-toe protective footwear (e.g., steel-toe shoes/boots)
- Non-specialty prescription safety eyewear
- Sunglasses/sunscreen
- Sturdy work shoes
- Linemen's boots
- Long sleeve shirts

Additionally, specific items covered (if used to comply with an OSHA standard) are listed, and include:

- Metatarsal foot protection
- Rubber boots with steel toes
- Non-prescription eye protection
- Goggles
- Face shields
- Hard hat
- Hearing protection
- Rubber sleeves
- Fall protection
- Climbing ensembles used by linemen (e.g., belts and climbing hooks)

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OSHA ANNOUNCES EMPLOYER-PAID PPE FINAL RULE

NECA continues to work toward understanding fully what the Final Rule means for both employers and employees. Clarification is still needed in a number of areas, including fire-resistant clothing, equipment maintenance (e.g., testing tools/equipment), collective bargaining agreements, and utility work. Both collective bargaining agreements and utility workers are affected by the ruling, but not in precise language.

A number of utility organizations commented on the rulemaking. The Edison Electric Institute (EEI), for example, requested specifically that apparel and clothing listed in the Transmission and Distribution standard (specifically, 1910.269 (1)(6)) not be regarded as PPE in the rulemaking, arguing that a statement to that effect would eliminate confusion and conflicting standards. While there is further attempt to clarify this confusion in the preamble, OSHA also states that a separate rulemaking revising that standard is underway. In this specific case, if FR clothing is found to be required in 1910.269 (in the T&D rulemaking), it would become subject to the provisions of the PPE rulemaking.

The effect on existing union contracts is addressed, and future contracts alluded to in the preamble of this rulemaking. OSHA maintains that a six-month compliance deadline allows for the expiration of existing contracts and negotiations for existing or new contracts to include provisions set forth in the Final Rule. Because PPE is usually a mandatory subject in negotiations, several public comments were received by OSHA about possible violation of policies of federal labor legislation with regard to workplace conditions. OSHA stated that the final rule did not inappropriately interfere, and that "the duty to bargain with unions over safety and health matters does not excuse employers from complying with OSHA standards."

The final PPE rule could help level the playing field since it will require non-union employers to pay costs that union employers have been paying all along under collectively bargained agreements. And, finally, contractors who provide required PPE to their workers can point to the OSHA rule to justify the costs to general contractors and owners. For more information, please visit the OSHA website at: www.osha.gov.

Portions of this article were excerpted from NECA NEWS, November 24, 2007 and December 3, 2007 website editions.

ELECTRICAL PROJECT SUPERVISION LEVEL III

The Electrical Contractors' Association of City of Chicago (ECA) Research and Education Committee concluded its 2007 educational programming with the final class of the Electrical Project Supervision Level III (EPS III) course which was held on December 17th at the Holiday Inn Oak Brook, Oak Brook Terrace, Illinois. The program had 26 attendees and was facilitated by Norb Slowikowski. The EPS III course is segmented into six sessions designed to strengthen the abilities of experienced project supervisors. Due to the success of the EPS series, it is anticipated that the full EPS programming will be repeated in 2008.

JANUARY 2008

UPCOMING EVENTS

January 9, 2008
 ECA Regular Membership Meeting
 Maggiano's Banquets Oak Brook, IL

January 16, 2008
 "Killer Contract Clauses" / Business Practices Interchange
 (Seminar and BPI)
 Medinah Shrine Center Addison, IL

January 22, 2008
 Chicago Commercial Real Estate
 Forecast Conference & Expo
 Hyatt Regency Chicago Chicago, IL
 Contact Valerie Miller: (312) 644-7115 or
 VMiller@REJournals.com for Registration

February 12 - 14, 2008
 Chicagoland Construction Safety Council (CCSC) & the
 Center to Protect Workers' Rights (CPWR) present the
 Construction Safety and Health by Design Expo.
 Donald E. Stephens Convention Center Rosemont, IL

February 21, 2008
 CCC "Project Awareness" Program
 Location: TBD Chicago, Illinois

April 6 - 9, 2008
 NECA District 4 & 7 Midwest Regional Conference
 The Ocean Reef Club Key Largo, Florida

Please contact the Association office for further information on any of these events.

LiveWire is a publication of the Electrical Contractors' Association of Chicago, Inc., Five Westbrook Corporate Center, Suite 940, Westchester, IL 60154.

Members are encouraged to submit articles and ideas for stories to the Association office.

"PROJECT AWARENESS" PROGRAM

The Electrical Contractors' Association of City of Chicago (ECA) has been an active participant with the Cosmopolitan Chamber of Commerce's (CCC's) "Project Awareness" Conference.

The ECA is a member of the CCC's Technical Assistance (TA) Committee, which consists of numerous governmental agencies, private construction firms and construction trade associations.

The CCC TA Committee is coordinating their 13th Annual "Project Awareness" Conference. The event brings together dozens of public and private entities in regard to forthcoming bidding opportunities in the Chicago Metropolitan Area.

The program is scheduled for Wednesday, February 21, 2008 at a location to be decided, Chicago, Illinois from 9:00 AM - 1:00 PM. You may contact the ECA for registration information at: (708) 531-0022.

Please note: The totals below for '06 & '07 include all electricians working under the Principal, Communication and Residential Agreements.

OCTOBER EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS

	2006	2007	Cumulative Hourly Totals
NUMBER OF CONTRACTORS	970	920	2006 13,873,103
JOURNEYPERSONS & APPRENTICES EMPLOYED	11,679	11,784	2007
HOURS WORKED	1,530,696	1,577,308	14,210,369