

ELECTRICAL CURRENTS

A Newsletter from the Office of L&I Chief Electrical Inspector Wayne Molesworth December 2025

Questions of the Month: What must an applicant provide when applying for a certificate of competency under Washington State law?

- A. A personal reference letter from a certified electrician in Washington
- B. Evidence, in a form prescribed by the department, affirming they meet qualifications under RCW 19.28.191 and 19.28.205,
- C. Proof of residency in Washington State for at least one year
- D. A notarized statement of work history signed by a union representative

See the answer at the bottom of page 2

Safety Tip of the Month

Always inspect electric holiday lights for frayed wires or broken sockets before use.

Avoid overloading outlets, and use only listed products designed for indoor or outdoor settings.

Turn off decorations when unattended or sleeping to reduce fire risk and keep your celebrations safe and bright.

Rules Adopted

The Washington State Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) has adopted changes to the state's electrical rules, effective **December 19**. These updates address safety codes, temperature ratings for certain non-metallic sheathed cables, and renewal of training certificates.

The rulemaking also adopts the 2026 edition of the National Electrical Code (NEC), published by the National Fire Protection Agency (NFPA 70). The 2026 NEC will replace the current 2023 edition, with a delayed effective date of December 31, 2026. Other changes include:

- Removing restrictions on temperature ratings for specific Non-Metallic Sheathed Cable types (NMC and NMB).
- Clarifying deadlines for electrical trainees to report work experience hours.
- Eliminating outdated language and improving formatting.

L&I filed a [CR-103 Rulemaking Order](#) on November 18, 2025. More information is available on the [L&I rulemaking](#) website or the [Electrical Laws, Rules & Policies](#) page. For questions, contact Meagan Edwards at 360-522-0125, FSPSRules@lni.wa.gov or the electrical program at Electricalprogram@lni.wa.gov.

The Work of Licensed Electrical Contractors Should be Free of Code Violations

Under RCW [19.28.361](#), contractors and electricians are personally responsible and liable for any injury or damage caused by defects in electrical installations. The RCW goes on to say that inspectors are not responsible for installation safety. Their role is limited to a visual review, not detailed checks of every wire, connector, or device. While inspectors may spot check final installations for receptacle polarity, ground-fault, and arc-fault protection, they are not expected to identify every correction—quality control is the responsibility of the contractor and their administrator or master electrician.

In 2024, inspectors conducted over 263,000 inspections, with 24% requiring corrections. Reducing corrections saves time and money for everyone involved. Contractors, administrators, and electricians are urged to ensure installations meet safety standards before inspection, helping maintain customer trust and minimizing costly reinspection.

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Who Can Install Seasonal and Year-Round Use Lighting?

Licensing and certification requirements depend on the type of lighting products used, not the installation voltage.

- **Field-fabricated lighting systems:** Firms that design and install custom, cut-to-fit seasonal or year-round lighting must be licensed electrical contractors and employ certified electricians. These installations also require permits and inspections.
- **Factory-assembled lighting products:** Firms or individuals installing unaltered, off-the-shelf products—such as those covered under [UL 588](#), *Standard for Seasonal Holiday Decorative Products*—do not need to be licensed electrical contractors or certified electricians.
- **Additional requirements:** If fasteners are used to attach lights to a structure, contractor registration rules under RCW [18.27](#) may apply.

Natural Disaster Preparedness and Electrical Safety

Disasters can strike suddenly, but storms and floods often provide early warning and time for possible evacuation. Preparing ahead helps protect lives, property, and emergency responders.

L&I offers helpful “how to” video clips covering key safety steps: [turning off electricity at the circuit box](#), [staying safe near downed power lines](#), and [setting up and operating generators](#) correctly.

When the governor declares a disaster, L&I may assist with damaged electrical systems caused by events such as snowstorms, dam failures, landslides, volcanic activity, wildfires, or other emergencies. The [Guidelines for Disaster Damage Determinations](#) explain how to obtain inspections and outline requirements for affected electrical equipment and conductors.

Recovery focuses on restoring power safely and reducing the risk of future failures. Learn more [here](#).

We are hiring electrical inspectors!

To apply you must first take an electrical assessment, available on the first (Tumwater), second (Tukwila), and third (Spokane) Tuesday of each month. To sign up for the assessment contact electricalassessment@lni.wa.gov. Look for available inspector positions at www.careers.wa.gov

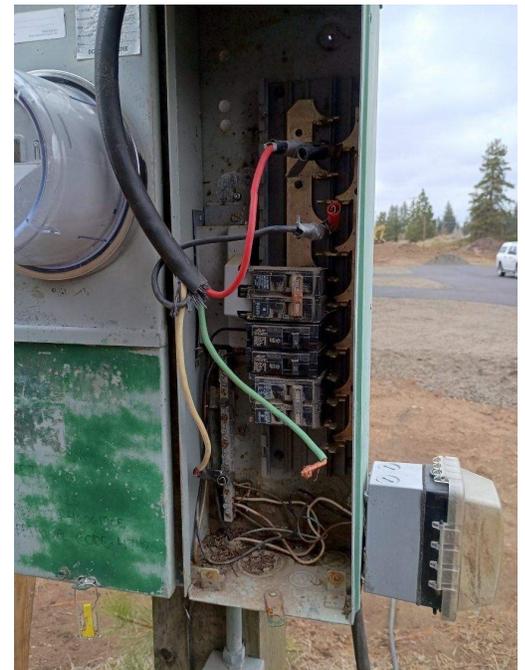
Answer to Question of the Month:

The correct answer is B. Applicants must submit evidence in the department’s prescribed format showing they meet the qualifications in RCW 19.28.191 and 19.28.205. Electricians from other jurisdictions must show equivalent qualifications.

Picture of the Month:

This picture recently came from the Division of Occupational Safety and Health (DOSH). Notice the alligator clips connected directly to the bus of the 100 amp panel. There is no equipment grounding conductor connected and no over current device protecting the cord. What does the other end look like?

If you are an electrical contractor or electrician, your license or certificate can be revoked for making an installation like this.



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