



# WATTS UP

June 01, 2009

Alaska Chapter NECA Newsletter

[www.alaskaneca.org](http://www.alaskaneca.org)

## Chapter Calendar

June 2

June 9

June 10

June 21

July 4

July 12

September 12-15

Anchorage JATC

Safety Committee

Board of Directors/Membership Meeting

Father's Day

Independence Day

NECA Open Moose Run Hill

NECA Convention/Seattle, WA

## Tool Box Talks

June 01, 2009

June 08, 2009

June 15, 2009

June 22, 2009

June 29, 2009

Health Hazard Recognition

Horseplay/Unsafe Acts

Housekeeping

Injury Prevention, Back/Injury Prevention, Ears

Injury Prevention, Eyes/Injury Prevention, Feet

## Updated Manual Of Labor Units Now Available

NECA's *Manual of Labor Units*, which lists the national average direct labor time required to install electrical material under typical conditions on a typical project, has been the industry standard for electrical construction estimators and project managers for decades. We revise it every other year to keep it up-to-date with changes in electrical products and installation methods. The 2009-2010 edition — now available through the online [NECA Store](http://www.alaskaneca.org) — has undergone one of the most thorough revisions ever. The goal with each revision process is to review approximately 20 percent of the data and this edition exceeds this goal by a considerable amount. The following four sections received the most intense review:

- **Section 1 - Integrated Building Systems** was modified to more accurately represent the various markets covered by this material. Groupings for fire alarm systems, security and access control systems, clock systems, audio visual systems, nurse call systems, closed circuit television systems and telephone systems are listed separately to help the contractor who may concentrate on one of these markets as a specialty. Also included is an extensive listing of cabling material, terminating material and testing procedures which could apply to the installation of each of the various types of systems.
- **Section 7 - Hazardous Wiring Systems** received a significant revision which added many new items while replacing some that were outdated. Some of the notable additions include explosion-proof conduit fittings, junction boxes, receptacles, switches and panel boards. Also, most of the picture images in this section have been replaced with more current pictures.
- **Section 11 - Outdoor Overhead and Underground Systems** includes changes relating to outside electrical construction and traffic signal material. Some items were added to "pole line hardware," including a new listing of pole-mounted capacitors and air break switches. Many changes and additions were made to the labor unit data for excavation, duct bank, and underground utility access work as well as other outside construction activities.

• **Section 14 - Alternative Energy Systems** is continuing to receive considerable attention with each revision process, and listings in this section will continue to increase with each future revision as this market develops. The new edition includes the addition of new photovoltaic collector material, wind generators and fuel cell equipment.

In addition to these four major section revisions, several individual items were addressed throughout the manual. These include a new listing for fiberglass conduit and fittings in Section 2 (Conduit, Raceway, Fittings and Related Items) and for sectional ground rods in Section 8 (Grounding & Lightning Protection Systems). Other individual item listings were added, deleted or changed throughout the entire book in response to specific needs that were brought before the MLU Task Force whose goal is to produce the most complete and accurate listing of labor unit data for the electrical construction industry.

Watch for a further announcement, coming soon, on the availability of a subscription to MLU data as a real-time database feed through [Trade Service](#), the industry's leading data provider on materials.

## Energy Solutions

\$43 Billion for Energy Projects: What does that mean for you?

The first quarterly report on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (the stimulus plan), points to some positive things for electrical contractors, according to the May 20 post on the new [Energy Solutions blog](#). Check the blog often for updates and helpful resources, or [subscribe to the ES RSS feed!](#) And, if you've succeeded in landing a stimulus project, green news blogger [Lara Richards](#) definitely wants to hear from you!

[Visit the Energy Solutions blog to read more!](#)

[Download the 1st Quarterly Report on ARRA \(the stimulus plan\)](#)

## Stimulus inquiries

This week, Lake was contacted by a NECA member bidding on one of the first projects released under the economic stimulus legislation. This marks the first of the inquiries received by Government Affairs regarding a project being bid on by a NECA contractor. NECA has initiated contact with several legislators that are impacted by the project in hopes of securing this opportunity for a NECA contractor. If your company is involved in bidding on work related to the stimulus, and we can possibly be of assistance with some congressional oversight, please feel free to contact us.

In an effort to ensure that our members are able to take advantage of as many stimulus opportunities as possible, NECA Government Affairs has begun to assemble a list of resources for our members. Attached is a document of Stimulus Resources that might be of value. As always, state stimulus opportunities can be found on [your state's recovery website](#). If you do not know the recovery website for your state, you can find it here. <http://www.recovery.gov/?q=content/state-recovery-page&mode=table>

## We Need More Apprentices Even in Slow Times

by Geary Higgins

When I was in college, a professor illustrated the boom and bust cycles of the marketplace with a discussion on the plight of farmers. He lamented that when a commodity – wheat or corn or pork – sold for a high price, farmers lost out because they were caught with little to sell at that high price.

So in response, farmers then increased their production of that particular commodity. The resultant surplus drove the price for that commodity down, so farmers lost out again, since they now had too much product to sell at too low a price. They would react by cutting production.

The resultant shortage drove prices up again, and so the farmers lost out again, because they had too little to sell at the higher price, and, sometimes, because the price was so high, people decided to eat chicken instead of pork. And so on and so on.

My professor then launched into a lengthy discussion on the immorality of the uncontrolled marketplace and the need for central control of prices and production to protect the farmers from themselves. Those of you who know me realize I didn't pay much attention after this point.

Why do I bring this up now? Because like the poor farmer, our industry sometimes reacts to the boom and bust of the marketplace by similarly sabotaging our own future – specifically in the number of apprentices we indenture.

We are hearing that because of the economy, many local JATCs are considering reducing the number of apprentices they indenture. We have even heard that some areas will not be bringing in **any** apprentices this year.

There are seemingly good reasons for doing this. We already have journeymen and apprentices on the book, and bringing in more will only make the problem worse. Some union members fear that so-called "cheap, first-year apprentices" will just replace journeymen and upper class apprentices on what few jobs remain. Employers fear that lack of work means apprentices will leave us and we will have wasted the time and money spent to train them. But to be competitive today, and tomorrow, we must continually indenture new apprentices.

For today, apprentices, mixed with journeymen and other classifications (where available), give us an effective, efficient and competitively priced crew mix to go after our regular customers and to get back into markets where the nonunion has cut us out with their own mix of selectively skilled employees. When you realize that our market share nationally is in the neighborhood of 40 percent, there is a lot more work available to us that we might be doing if we could successfully utilize apprentices to bring down our composite costs.

For tomorrow, apprentices assure us a fully trained workforce. It takes us three to five years to turn out a journey-level worker. I don't know what the market is going to look like five years from today, but what I do know is we are barely bringing in enough apprentices now to meet our replacement needs, let alone grow our market.

Our annual look at the need for apprentices in the inside market segment, "Estimating the Need for New Electricians" produced by the Construction Labor Research Council, indicates we need to bring in over 9,600 new apprentices each year just to replace those who will leave. In 2008, we indentured 9,813. The Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the industry will grow by just under one percent over the next few years. If we want to just meet this rate of growth, our need for apprentices jumps to over 12,000 a year. If we want to actually gain market share and grow at double the industry rate, we need to bring in more than 15,000 apprentices a year.

It **is** tough to indenture additional apprentices when it looks like they might be spending their non-classroom time on the bench. We don't want to be losing them for lack of work and then see them working for the nonunion. But we must be careful that we don't let our caution cripple us.

Local decisions can't be made based solely on long-term national statistics. Unlike my old college professor, I don't believe that we can centrally plan the number of electricians we will need and where we will need them.

On the other hand, local decisions shouldn't be made solely on the basis of how many journeymen are on the book the week the JATC meets. I encourage local parties that when you analyze market needs and future manpower levels, you do so with the mindset of expanding our industry, and of creating more jobs and opportunity, not simply trying to protect jobs we already have.

### **NECA 2009 Seattle: Good Reasons To Register Early And Arrive Early**

In addition to the Management Seminars and Technical Workshops that will be presented during our Convention & Show (September 12-15), a dozen different Pre-Convention Workshops will be offered, some **starting as early as 8:00 a.m., Friday, September 11**. We've added courses in business development and management and arranged for industry experts to lead them to help you survive -- *and thrive* -- in this tough economy. **Early registration ends July 24.** [Register online.](#)

### **FUTURE SCHEDULE OF EVENTS.....**

October 2-5	NECA Convention/Boston, MA
October 22-25	NECA Convention/San Diego, CA
September 30-October 3	NECA Convention/Las Vegas, NV
October 12-15	NECA Convention/Washington, DC