



May 01, 2008

Alaska Chapter NECA Newsletter

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

## Chapter Calendar

May 6

May 9

May 13

May 26

July 13

**Anchorage JATC**

**Board/Membership Meeting in Juneau**

**Safety Committee**

**Memorial Day**

**NECA OPEN Golf Tournament**

## Tool Box Talks

May 05, 2008

May 12, 2008

May 19, 2008

May 26, 2008

**Fire Prevention**

**First Response, Medical/Moving an Injured Person**

**Flame Resistant Apparel**

**Grounding and Shock/Hazards of Electricity**

## NECA Comments on Proposed DOL Apprenticeship Guidelines

Bethesda, MD – The National Electrical Contractors Assn. (NECA) recently submitted comments to the U.S. Dept. of Labor on proposed changes to U.S. apprenticeship programs. NECA is the leading sponsor of electrician apprenticeship programs nationwide, with more than 40,000 apprentices enrolled in nearly 300 local training programs. NECA and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers are partners in the program administered through the National Joint Apprenticeship Training Program.

“Like any other institution, it is good to review how apprenticeship operates and addresses the needs of the industry it serves,” wrote NECA Vice President for Labor Relations Geary Higgins in NECA’s comments to DOL. “But change for [the sake of change alone] is equally problematic.”

Of particular concern are some of the broad generalizations made in the proposed guidelines. One of the more contentious changes would be the adoption of a “competency-based” system that would allow apprentices to demonstrate aptitude based solely on classroom testing.

NECA’s apprenticeship program requires both classroom and on-the-job training. NECA apprentices must demonstrate what they have learned through written tests and practical application, under less than perfect “laboratory” circumstances, on a real job site. This “field experience” means that NECA apprentices must also know the appropriate safety precautions and project management skills – not just a basic knowledge of the task at hand.

For these reasons, as well as concerns for jobsite and public safety, NECA opposes change allowing competency-based systems and interim credentials unless and until these arrangements can be held accountable to some objective industry-based standard.

NECA also offered comments on specific portions of the proposed changes, including:

Supporting regulations that would allow programs to supplement, but not replace any significant amount of, classroom time with electronic media;

Supporting a mandatory review of every newly registered apprenticeship program after its first year in operation before its registration becomes permanent;

Supporting consistent application of the apprentice rules and regulations across the country, with DOL retaining the right to assure that the programs recognized by the states meet the national standards; and

NECA's comments were offered in response to DOL's request for feedback surrounding the proposed rule changes. NECA also added its voice to those calling for a further extension of the comment period and public hearings in order to assure that any changes that are made to the regulations have been thoroughly discussed and developed before implementation.

The full text of NECA comments on the proposed rule changes to the apprenticeship program can be viewed here [http://www.necanet.org/files/NECA\\_Comments%20to%20DOL1.pdf](http://www.necanet.org/files/NECA_Comments%20to%20DOL1.pdf)

### **"Eight Key Ingredients to Build Customer Loyalty" Business Know-How (04/08) Timm, Paul R.**

There are a number of rules that small businesses should follow in order to increase loyalty among their customers, according to Paul R. Timm, a customer service consultant. First, businesses should build an image of reliability by striving to standardize service and product quality. By doing so, businesses will be able to build repeat business. Businesses should also work to enhance their credibility with customers by doing exactly what they say they will do all of the time. Businesses should avoid having a hidden agenda, and should work to provide clear value to their customers and remind them of this value. Another essential tool in building a loyal customer base is the business' staff. Frontline employees should have upbeat personalities and good attitudes, and, like other employees, should be trained constantly. By following these and other steps, businesses will be able to build a loyal customer base, which will in turn prevent businesses from having to spend a great deal of money to bring in new customers.

### **"Avoiding Five Big Mistakes" Facility Safety Management (03/01/08) Altmayer, Larry**

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) has lately been emphasizing electrical safety in its inspections, and some facility managers are finding standards for Electrical Hazard Assessments and Arc-flash Hazard Analysis confusing to comply with. Some of the main mistakes managers tend to make when using in-house staff or consultants to conduct assessments include conducting an incomplete assessment, because many companies incorrectly believe there is no risk of Arc-flash below 480v and stop the assessment at that point, but this violates OSHA regulations which require assessment down to 50v. Companies also often make the mistake of stopping an assessment after the first Hazard Risk Category 0 rating, but all equipment that is supplied power by that piece still must be assessed. Another common error companies make is improper use of the NFPA 70E Table Method as a short cut; its footnotes stipulate that it should be used only if available fault current and over current protective device clearing time fall within certain limits. Using in-house staff for an assessment is always a mistake--it is a very complex and labor-intensive job that typical electricians do not have the background or experience to complete properly. Using an outside engineering firm is a better option, but only if the firm can clearly show that it is qualified to perform the job adequately. The last two common mistakes companies make are not fixing problems identified from an assessment, which can incur stiff OSHA penalties in the millions of dollars, and not changing work procedures after the assessment.

### **"Utilities Jump on Board to Plan for a World of Plug-in Cars" USA Today (03/31/08) P. 6B ; Healey, James R.**

Electric utilities are working with auto manufacturers and technical firms to create "smart-charging" technology that decides how fast and when a vehicle is recharged. Due to the belief that plug-in hybrid vehicles (PHEVs) are the wave of the future, utilities are examining all aspects of recharging. PHEVs have larger batteries than typical gas-electric hybrids and can be recharged from a home outlet. They operate on their electric motors more and their gas engines less. Prototypes indicate that between 70 miles-per-gallon and 120 mpg are possible. Other plug-ins on the horizon are completely-electric cars, such as the Volt from General Motors. Meanwhile, the Electric Power Research Institute is teaming Ford with multiple East Coast utilities that will try out ways to recharge Ford's prototype plug-in Escape hybrid. Plug-in investors, however, are interested in circumventing problems and making the most of PHEVs' advantages. For instance, changing recharging to periods when a utility has additional capacity and could cost less is crucial.

## **"Rising Costs, Uncertain Demand Squeeze Nonresidential Construction" Associated General Contractors of America (03/18/08)**

Commenting on the release of February's figures for producer price indexes (PPIs) from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) and housing permits from the Census Bureau, Associated General Contractors of America Chief Economist Ken Simonson notes that construction costs are continuing to increase at a faster rate than general inflation while demand is decreasing for some nonresidential construction sectors. "The PPI for inputs to construction industries climbed 0.6 percent in February, compared to 0.2 percent for the PPI for finished goods and 0.3 percent for the consumer price index (CPI), before seasonal adjustment," says Simonson. "That huge gap is especially troublesome for contractors on public projects. Public agencies often rely on the CPI to project future costs but they are coming up short of the dollars needed to award contracts. The problem is most acute with highway projects, where the huge run-ups in diesel, asphalt, concrete and steel costs have pushed up the PPI by 50 percent since December 2003." These climbing costs have contributed to a fall in demand within the multi-unit residential, office, hotel, and retail construction sectors as well. "Nevertheless, I do expect continued strength for hospital, university, power, energy and communication construction," says Simonson. "There is ongoing demand for these facilities, and their financing is generally more secure than for projects that depend on short-term rents."

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

October 4-7, 2008

NECA Convention/Chicago, IL

September 12-15, 2009

NECA Convention/Seattle, WA