

## **BENEFITS OF STATE ELECTRICAL INSPECTION SERVICE**

- The original Board of Electricity was established by the legislature in 1899 to license electricians in populated areas to ensure safe electrical installations. The agency known as the Board of Electricity was consolidated into the Construction Codes and Licensing Division (CCLD) of the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI) in 2005 along with plumbing, building, high pressure piping, boilers, and other units.
- Licensing has been administered statewide since 1937 and electrical inspections have been performed statewide since 1951.
- The department's advisory electrical board is comprised of eleven members appointed by the Governor. The board composition includes various electrical industry groups and the general public.
- CCLD's Electrical Inspection unit and associated electrical licensing unit are self-funded with inspection fees and licensing fees. The unit does not appropriate any money from the legislature. In addition to DLI staff attorneys, the Attorney General's office provides additional legal counsel.
- There are no direct costs to any of the counties, cities or towns in which the department provides electrical inspection service. The department is responsible for all costs for inspection fee collection, Request for Electrical Inspection certificate (permit) processing, inspection program and license program oversight, investigative and enforcement activities, complaint resolution and numerous other responsibilities.
- As of May 2009, CCLD has partnered with CRW Systems to implement a new comprehensive technology solution that will be used to manage geographical information, projects, plan reviews, permits, enforcement cases, licensing, and other information for building, electrical, plumbing, elevator, boiler, high pressure piping, and other CCLD functions. CCLD staff, inspectors, contractors, the public and others will have access to permit, project, licensing, and enforcement information via the Internet. Contractors and homeowners will be able to file permits online and pay inspection fees with a credit card. The new system is tentatively scheduled to be implemented in November 2009.
- The department is responsible for collecting, escrowing, and processing inspection fees and processing Request for Electrical Inspection certificates (permits). Only until such time that electrical inspections have been successfully completed are contract inspectors allowed to bill the department for their services. The department retains a small percentage of the fees to offset the costs of administering the statewide electrical inspection program. This unique system provides an incentive for contract inspectors to make timely and thorough electrical inspections. The department also ensures that inspection fee shortages are collected from installers and that inspection fee overpayments are properly refunded.
- Installers of electrical work schedule inspections directly with the contract electrical inspectors. Inspections requested by 8:30 a.m. are normally made the same day (metro), within 24 hours in most rural locations, and within 48 hours in the most remote areas. Under this program, cities are not burdened with scheduling inspections, handling telephone calls or tracking inspection work activity.
- Contract electrical inspectors are independent contractors. They are fully licensed, bonded, and insured. Only qualified and experienced individuals are selected for inspection service contracts. State law requires all inspectors (state and municipal) to be licensed as journeyman or master electricians. The average contract electrical inspector has 30 years of experience in the electrical industry. This business arrangement eliminates the need for costly full-time employees – under this model, cities are not burdened with hiring, training, supervising and retaining qualified electrical inspectors.
- Contract electrical inspectors are required to ensure there is no disruption of inspection service during vacations, absences, or emergencies. Contract electrical inspectors network with each other and the department's Electrical Area Representatives to ensure uninterrupted service. Since inspection service

contracts are renewed annually, the state is continuously monitoring the performance of every contract electrical inspector to ensure timely, thorough and professional inspection service.

- The department only contracts with inspectors who are professional, responsible, reasonable, courteous, thorough and have the necessary knowledge, qualifications, training, and experience for the job.
- Solitary municipal electrical inspectors are often disadvantaged because they have no backup help and they lack the expert technical resources and support network provided by the department's Electrical Area Representatives, the electrical technical staff in St. Paul, the statewide electrical inspection program, and the comprehensive resources of the Construction Codes and Licensing Division within the department.
- The department has direct authority over licensed electrical, elevator, and technology contractors and their licensed and registered electrical, elevator and technology workers. The department is in the best position to conduct investigations, process routine or contested complaints and administer disciplinary or enforcement actions. Cities that provide their own electrical inspections are responsible for conducting and funding their own complaint investigations and resolving any disputes.
- Any liability, errors, and omissions directly related to electrical inspections are shared by the installer of the wiring, the contract electrical inspector, and the department, not the county, city, or town.
- Designated inspection areas and contract electrical inspectors are under constant review. Post-inspection field audits are performed by the department's area representatives to ensure contract compliance, timely inspections, code compliance, customer satisfaction, and overall quality of electrical inspection service.
- Due to the high volume of electrical inspections across the state, the department is able to maintain inspection fees at very reasonable and acceptable levels and still maintain quality inspection service. (For example, the typical electrical inspection fee for a new home is only \$135). A minimum fee job is only \$35.
- The department is the electrical inspection authority for approximately 80% of the population and for approximately 99% of the land area of the state.
- Electrical contractors overwhelmingly prefer state electrical inspection service for many reasons (uniformity, consistency, timely inspections, simplified forms and inspection fees, complaint resolution, appeals process, uniform enforcement of laws and rules, and soon-to-be implemented online permits and online payments)
- Despite making several thousand separate electrical inspections every month, the department only averages 1 or 2 inspection-related scheduling complaints each month. Statewide cell phone communication and email messaging with Electrical Area Representatives and electrical inspectors enhances the ability to resolve such complaints in a very timely manner to the satisfaction of all parties.
- The department's Electrical Area Representatives manage, coordinate, and assist the contract electrical inspectors with special electrical inspections for carnivals, circuses, celebrations, fairs, festivals, tournaments, filmmaking, and numerous other short-term, temporary, transitory or other special events that can overwhelm a solitary municipal inspector.
- The department can promptly mobilize the necessary staffing and resources to ensure electrical safety, proper licensing, and thorough and timely electrical inspections when communities that have been affected by natural disasters or similar devastating and traumatic events begin the repair and rebuilding process.
- Contract electrical inspectors are expected to meet the reasonable expectations of installers and they will often make accommodations by making electrical inspections after normal business hours, during evening hours, and even on weekends and holidays if necessary.
- The ratio of Electrical Area Representatives to contract electrical inspectors is approximately 1:10. This ensures proper oversight, monitoring, follow-up and auditing of the contract inspector's performance.
- The contract electrical inspectors and Electrical Area Representatives regularly communicate and cooperate with local and county building, housing, and fire officials, and other public officials, in order to ensure efficient and timely operations for all parties and to promote public safety and welfare.