



Clackamas  
Multnomah  
Washington  
COUNTIES

ABCD field office, the Tri-County Service Center administers the minor label program and coordinates forms, processes, and application of code for building programs in Clackamas, Multnomah, & Washington counties.

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# News *Flash*

A bi-monthly newsletter for electricians and electrical contractors

April-June 2002

## Electrical code forum slated for May 9

The National Electrical Contractors Association is sponsoring the next Tri-County electrical code forum 4-7 p.m., May 9, at the State Office Building in Portland, 800 NE Oregon Street, Room 120 C. The Building Codes Division offers two hours of code-related credit for attendance and participation. Three hours of AIA ASW credits are also available to qualifying attendees.

The code forums address questions related to inconsistent code application and inspection standards

among tri-county's 27 jurisdictions. A panel of industry and local government code officials discuss and answer the questions. John Powell, the state's electrical code chief, is a non-voting member of the panel. Building departments in the region have committed to following the standards set by the code panel.

Contractors and inspectors are invited to add their questions to the agenda by faxing them to Joan Stevens-Schwenger, (503) 872-6735, or sending them by e-mail to Joanie.M.Stevens-Schwenger@state.or.us. ▲

## Ladders often required for inspections

At the February 7 code forum, a contractor asked if the inspecting jurisdiction could require the contractor to provide a ladder for inspections. The answer is "yes"; an inspector could fail an installation for "failure to provide access."

The panel encouraged contractors to alert inspectors that an installation requires a ladder for access when

they call for an inspection. A phone list for electrical departments in tri-county jurisdictions is printed at the end of the Q and A section. When doing minor-label installations that require ladder access, contractors should note the need for a ladder in the minor-label installation log. ▲

## February 7 code forum questions

Tri-county jurisdictions have agreed to follow the guidance of the code panel provided in the following answers.

**Q In some jurisdictions, inspectors require that the contractors on commercial jobs supply ladders and flashlights for inspectors to use at the installations—otherwise the inspections are failed. Can this be a requirement? Are all jurisdictions requiring this?**

**A** Some city ordinances require the contractor to provide a ladder for the inspector. Beaverton is an example. In other jurisdictions, like Clackamas County, the inspector supplies the ladder. The requirement comes from ORS 479.820, which says that the state has to be able to perform an inspection without interference from others and that contractors must provide inspectors access to the installations. The code panel noted that no party (not building departments or contractors or their respective attorneys or insurance companies) want to assume the liability for ladder use.

Because ordinances and practices vary from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, the panel concluded that one recommendation could not apply to all jurisdictions; instead, the panel offered the following

advice: Communication is key. Contractors and inspectors should **coordinate** ladder access at the time of the inspection call. If it is a minor-label inspection, the inspector should cooperate with the homeowner *and* the contractor to ensure access. Ask if a ladder is needed; if so, ask what size is needed. (See the phone list following Q and A.)

**Q Washington County and the City of Portland are satisfied that manufacturers' instructions for the installation of Safewatch Pro Alarm Systems don't require a ground wire to be connected to terminal #25 of the alarm panel or to the panel case. Grounding is optional "for additional protection in areas of severe electrical activity (lightning)." The Pacific Northwest has low levels of lightning activity, according to the National Electrical Code. Will this application be accepted tri-county-wide?**

**A** Yes, manufacturers' instructions should be followed. When there is a difference between manufacturers' instructions and the NEC, the code prevails.

**Q What sort of permit is an electrician supposed to pull when doing a residential service call?**

Continued . . .



**A** The permit depends on the scope of work. The job could require a full permit or a minor label. OAR 918-309-0080 allows an electrician to use a temporary permit, if the work exceeds the scope of a minor label. One can post a permit application form with the words TEMPORARY PERMIT at the job site and call for a permit within 24 hours of the jurisdiction office's opening time. All jurisdictions honor such temporary permits.

**Q Is a desk in a kitchen considered countertop space? Must it have receptacles spaced the same as kitchen countertops?**

**A** A desk is a desk ... and is not considered countertop space. Therefore, GFCI protection is not required. You must use #12 wire.

**Q In a large kitchen, does a wall receptacle have to be on an appliance circuit?**

**A** Section 4401.4 of the International One- and Two-Family Dwelling Code states that all receptacles in the kitchen shall be on small-appliance circuits except for clocks, appliances, and switched receptacles for lighting or a refrigerator. Section 210-52(b)(1) has the same requirements.

**Q When will arc-fault protectors be required?**

**A** The effective date was April 1, 2002. Arc-fault protectors will be required in new construction except one- and two-family dwellings and will be required in all structures that have dwelling units (multi-family, hotel/motel, or any room designated as a dwelling unit under NEC).

**Q If I have a limited heating and refrigeration license, can I perform the bonding of gas lines and simply swap out air conditioning units?**

**A** Yes, a limited heating and refrigeration license allows bonding gas lines when replacing or repairing existing units because gas bonding is part of that installation. However, a limited heating and refrigeration 440-2725 (4-6/02/COM)

license doesn't allow running a bond back to the panel. Allowable bonding is restricted to the short piece of wire from the gas line to the unit.

**Q Can a limited heating and refrigeration license install a new gas fireplace?**

**A** No. A limited heating and refrigeration license is restricted to maintaining service or to repairing or replacing existing equipment. It does not permit you to perform new installations.

**Q In classified locations of commercial garages, must drop cords be covered?**


**A** Drop cords must have covers to protect the bulb.

**Q Will arc-fault protection be required in schools?**

**A** No, arc-fault protectors will not be required unless the school has sleeping quarters. ▲

### Tri-county building department electrical-inspection phone numbers

Beaverton .....	(503) 526-2542
Canby, Clackamas, Happy Valley, Oregon City, Sandy, West Linn, and Wilsonville .....	(503) 353-4750
Cornelius, Durham, Forest Grove, Tualatin, and Washington County ...	(503) 846-8123
Estacada .....	(503) 630-8274
Fairview, Troutdale and Wood Village .....	(503) 674-7229
Gresham .....	(503) 618-2565
Hillsboro .....	(503) 681-6144
King City and Tigard .....	(503) 639-4171
Lake Oswego .....	(503) 635-0287
Molalla .....	(503) 829-6853
Portland .....	(503) 823-6803



*News flash*

BCD's message  
to homeowners –  
"Permits protect  
the safety and  
value of your  
home."

Our message to  
contractors –  
Refuse to work  
without a permit!