

Responses to Survey - State Electrical Board Total responses:* 50 (1 answered only 3 questions†; another may have answered twice)

<p>Highest Compliment</p>	<p><i>Ability to keep profession from criticism - 8 Ability to monitor profession. - 24 Ability to streamline CE - 9 None - 8</i></p> <p>Other: Ability to stay afloat even though money is always going away from the program. Allow the board to do more by putting fines levied against people caught violating state law back into the program. -- If we allow CE & CW in our state - which by law they can not be here now - would hurt our industry as they are acting as electricians when they are not licensed, not trained, not united. They are out for themselves and we are to train them and treat them as equals to take away our jobs. Do not let this happen. Keep our laws intact to keep them out of our state. - They do an amazing job for volunteers with a limited amount of time to spend.</p>
<p>Biggest Complaint</p>	<p><i>Licensing fees too high - 8 Lack of Information - 5 Regulations too strict - 3 Board's response to unlicensed practice - 30 Renewal timelines too rigid - 2 None - 7</i> Other: Lack of compliance officers and enforcement (7 responses)</p> <p>If an unlicensed person is caught, the board has no teeth, it can only issue a "cease and desist" letter. (3) - Fines go to general fund instead of to the board. If the fines stayed with the board, the board wouldn't be "always going broke". (several similar comments) -- Department has all the control over costs. The Board and I have no say how this money is spent. I have no say how and when these moneys are spent and it increases my license fee to cover the Departments spending. With out the electrical board having any power to enforce unlicensed practice in Montana other that sending them a warning by letter we are putting our safety and the public safety in jeopardy. A two year renewal is uncalled for. Three years is so much better...you are making me take continuing education units on the same Code over again and costly when I have to keep up my license in other states as well which are all on three years. - The electrical board needs the authority to actually enforce the licensing requirements, instead of only being able to send a cease and desist letter. Also, the board and licensees have no say in department spending or fee changes, which could jeopardize the ability of the board to fulfill its function to protect the public's safety. - Too much Union influence and a sense of the board as a good ol' boys club. - We need stiffer penalties for the unlicensed and for licensed that are violating state law to protect the public - Fines should be increased. - Boards have no control over costs as it is all determined by the Department. If the Department wants to spend more money, the licensees must absorb it or lose their licensing board. The boards have no teeth to truly enforce unlicensed practice other than send a "cease and desist" letter to a violator. - I have had a Montana electrical license for 20+ years. I moved & did not receive notice of renewal & was charged a late fee. Even though I had maintained my license for 20 years, the board would not suspend the late fee even though I have not worked in Montana for over 10 years. - Electrical board and PE board is too restrictive on entry and is a denial of entry into the market place for qualified individuals by bureaucratic regulation. - The boards should have the right to test someone for a license. They should not have the right to Dictate where an individual gets his education. Reading books and experience should be an accepted qualification to take the tests.</p>
<p>Reasons the board is important: Makes sure people are trained and the public will receive good, safe and reliable installations. - When administered properly, licensing puts everyone on somewhat of an even playing field. (2 similar comments) Consumers need more than a Yellow Page ad, or a flashy website to help separate the qualified from the unqualified. - Protects people from unlicensed tradesmen. - Without a State Electrical Board, the quality of electrical installations will diminish. Quality electrical installations are imperative to public safety and well-being. Licensing should be mandatory for all trades to ensure that any and all construction in the state is being done by competent people. - Important for public and personal safety. I can't imagine how many fires there would be if just anybody did electrical work. I bet there would be more deaths due to electrocution as well. - I believe that the licensing board is important to protect life and property. Without the board's regulations; poor electrical installations, fires, and/or deaths would occur. - Electrical fires are a major cause of death in this nation. We need better laws to put some teeth in the electrical board to keep nonlicensed people from causing these unnecessary deaths. Safety is number one in our industry; not having licensing would be devastating for the safety of the people of Montana. -- All professional individuals should be licensed, so that the state can monitor all individuals within a certain profession. - Maintains standards of training and qualification for electricians. -</p>	

Reasons the board is important (continued) -- If the electrical field became an unregulated trade, the results would be so bad. We would put our Montana citizens' safety in jeopardy. The result of poor electrical installation would result in fires and/or could result in death. The result of a fire could be economically devastating, personally devastating, and put our trade in a bad position. We need to pull together to keep the trust that our trade will protect and keep ourselves safe and the folks we work for safe. - Unlicensed usually means unskilled which leads to shoddy and dangerous work -- the board does not enforce its own rules concerning unlicensed craft workers. - If you cannot pass the tests you shouldn't be an electrician -- lowering standards so people can have jobs is not good practice. We have enough cheating going on as it is and very little local enforcement for the amount of fees that we pay. - Without proper oversight and regulation of the electrical industry, the result will be fires and deaths. The safety of everyone in the state would be at risk if untrained or unscrupulous people were allowed to do electrical work due to a lack of an effective electrical board. - Due to the professional nature of the craft, I feel it is important to maintain some standards and the board does just that. - The board is a place to go and take a grievance against someone that is doing below-standard work. I like the setting of a minimum standard in which you can become licensed. - Electrical inspectors let contractors slide with unlicensed workers or undocumented apprentices. These contractors pay less and are not on a level playing field with legitimate law-abiding contractors. No one seems to care or do anything about unlicensed workers. They should be prosecuted and fined. The electrical board needs to be even on representatives from union and nonunion shops. - There is a need for a governing body to monitor the license and education of electricians. Education of apprentices also needs to be monitored. - I have seen what has happened to other trades that don't have a licensing board. They run amok! Public safety and job quality are secondary to making a buck. - The Board serves to enforce state laws that protect public safety and property. Without some means of enforcement laws become meaningless. Having worked in the profession for 30 yrs it scares me to think of what it would be like without a licensing board. The almighty dollar would rule and safety, continuing education, and inspection would be out the window. Montana has strong laws that protect people & property by requiring professionals to do the work. I am proud of our electrical industry in Montana and many other states envy Montana. - I want the comfort of knowing that if myself or family member buys a dwelling or a commercial property that it was wired according to the NEC. Most of all wiring is out of sight, in walls, attics etc. Once it is covered numerous violations could be made by a person that if unlicensed would not know the difference between right and wrong. - This board is important to the state because if there are poor electrical installations, fires and deaths will be the result. I cannot imagine the horror of having the electrical profession as an unregulated trade. - Compliance of standards & licensing enforcement. - The license board is essential in order to maintain the standards for our state and public safety. I would like to see higher fine costs for unlicensed practice. A slap on the wrist to contractors and individuals is not effective as I can plainly see on a daily basis. - Making sure professionals are up to date on current codes and regulations and qualified to perform work.

Public Health -	Public Welfare - 1	Public Safety - 22	All or combination - 25	None of these - 1
Scope of Practice:	Too Narrow - 21	Too Broad - 3		Just Right - 23

Reasons too narrow: Low voltage installations should be addressed. (several similar comments) VoiceDataVideo must be overseen. Telecommunications have become the mainstay in homes today, and safe and proper installations must be overseen. - Not enforcing against unlicensed contractors performing electrical wiring. - The low voltage industries of Voice Data Video, Telecommunications, etc. need to be under the state electrical board because they are used in conjunction with the electrical system. In our "Wired" society all of these systems tie together and all should be covered under licensing. The low voltage, voice data video, and telecommunications industries are not licensed. I work side by side with these contractors and watch their subpar work which ultimately is plugged into our systems. They should have to follow the same rules I have to, for a better end product and also for the public's safety. With our new "Wired Existence" there are few systems not interlaced. -- Low voltage and solar do not require a certification and they should. - Too many electrical installations are not covered by the board such as telephone, data, fiber optics, and other low voltage installations. - Not being able to stop so called "Handymen" from doing my trade. Not fining them enough so they get the message that they are not licensed and can't do the work is the biggest problem. If I was drinking and driving, the law enforcement officials should not be able to levy a fine against me if I didn't have a driver's license right? -- The state requires any individual in the state to be licensed to do electrical work, however there aren't enough inspectors to check on violations and they are not allowed to write tickets. Some people have too much influence on the board as far as who can and can't be ticketed. - It is becoming more important to regulate the low voltage, photo cell installation, and alternative energy design and installation. North Western Energy has already started on their own. Montana needs to catch up.

Reasons too narrow, continued:- The low voltage work (controls, automation, nurse call, etc) that is being done by nonlicensed, supposedly cross-trained people from other trades causes continual problems. A plumber that takes a basic electrical control class as part of an apprenticeship is not a qualified electrician. These people need to have a license, know the NEC, and answer to someone if they are going to be doing this work.- Low voltage, telecommunications, voice-data-video, etc., installations need to be overseen by the MT Electrical Board as they are increasingly being used side by side with electrical installations. The day is gone that a house/business has only a couple of TV and phone jacks. - As a Master Electrician I feel that I have the Knowledge to install a Fire Alarm System, CCTV system, Access Control system, Security alarm system, Mass Notification system, HVAC system, or even work on an elevator control system. I should not be required to get 10 different Licenses from 3 Different boards. The Board for Fire Prevention is missing from the Drop down from the last question. - We also need licensing and state board control of limited energy wiring.

Reasons too wide: The electrical board is considering regulating low voltage; experience requirements are too strict for entry into the profession

Problems with other professions' scope of practice? No - 42; Yes - 4: Board of Private Security (2); Board of Plumbers (1)

What laws/regulations have caused the most problems? -- Changing renewals to two years. Other states I license in are three years. Causes problems earning and keeping track of CEU's required. - Shorten the renewal and keep the fees the same. - Having the utilities be in charge of permitting. Having somebody from the rural sector try to do away with licensing requirements - The adoption of the 2008/2011 NEC (National Electrical Code) has been tough. It is tough to justify the new costs to customers. We as electricians cannot be expected to protect everyone from every potential situation. I would like to see a common sense approach come from the code writing panels and quit allowing the industry manufacturers to write the codes. - 4 responses similar to: When the Electrical Board is able to levy a fine against a violator, licensees expend the money for lawyers and staff and ultimately this results in increased license fees for licensees to recover our costs. The law should be changed so Boards can recover costs and after recovery the leftover from fines can go to the General Fund. - 50% selection for continuing education [yet] I have been selected every cycle to send in proof of continuing education. I have been taking more credits than required. - Lack of regulation. The "handyman" industry has gone wild. Many of the things these "Handymen" offer for services should be covered under state licensing. - When the board has a case of an unlicensed person doing work, it takes too long to go in front of the board. - There are very few regulations for service or "handymen" who need to be regulated the same as licensed workers are and be licensed. - Nothing so far. -- Continuing education. -- Too costly to do business; biggest problem is workers comp. In general, Montana is anti-business and has tons of bureaucrats who love to police the world. -- The lack of support to stop unlicensed folks from wiring, such as a handyman who comes in and installs an electrical outlet for a sprinkler system. Handymen seem to think they can just connect where ever they want to and not see the danger or end results that could put folks in harms way. There was a judge in Billings that allowed unlicensed electricians to work at a refinery and the end result was because of faulty work by those hired men (non electricians) there was a fire. The master electrician was brought before the judge and fined. The judge then cut the fine in half and the company paid the fine. The master electrician kept his license without any consequences and licensed electricians had to come in and fix the problems. When we objected to this at first, we were told we the licensed electricians were making too much of it. This judge who was a licensed attorney did not follow the law and put everyone's safety in danger. The 2-year renewal period has caused problems also as it is so unnecessary. We take our CE courses and pay our fees and then have to take another CE course on the same Code update and pay another fee when I also have to take courses for other states and they are all on a 3-year renewal period. It gets to be very expensive to take all these courses and renewal fees. -- Increased license fees are a result of lawyers and staff spending our money. When the electrical board gets the chance to levy a fine against an unlicensed person, the fine goes to the general fund. The law should be changed to have the boards recover their costs and any remaining money could go to the general fund. - The board should be able to recover costs of enforcement and KEEP using the funds to enforce instead of the general fund keeping the costs. - The only problem is the lack of regulation of unlicensed people doing electrical work. Requiring electrical work to be done by licensed electricians and providing the electrical board with the needed authority to enforce the licensure ensures the safety of the public. - Going to a 2-year renewal when our electrical code book is on a 3-year cycle. The journeyman upgrades are sometimes a repeat because of this. Going to a 3-year cycle on our license with a price increase would be worth it. - Being audited for continuing education upgrades, and having to mail in certificates for same, when the fact that I attended the classes was already posted on the board's site by the instructors just seems redundant. - If an individual possesses a valid journeyman license it should be accepted by more states as valid to perform work.

What laws/regulations have caused the most problems? (continued) - Not being able to use a helper. There are many things in my line of work that a helper can or should be able to do. - It is possible for a general contractor to get an electrical permit for a home by having the homeowner apply for the permit. Since a homeowner can wire their own home they have found a loophole that allows even an elderly person to apply for and receive the permit, then the non-licensed general will wire the structure for them. What is the benefit for an electrical contractor to be licensed? - Fines given to a person without any license caught doing electrical work are too low. The state apparently has very little recourse toward these people. If I did something wrong I could lose my livelihood. The fine for cutting someone's hair without a license is higher than wiring a house without a license. If someone's hair is cut poorly they may look silly for a couple of weeks, if someone wires someone else's house poorly the customer could lose everything they own, or worse yet, they will lose their family to a fire! - The definition of what projects need to be permitted. e.g. refinery, power plant, - None, unless they strip enforcement. What we need is better education of the legislature on the importance of electrical inspection and licensing. There is a person electrocuted every 12 hrs in the USA and that is with good legislation and licensing in most states. Most of those electrocuted are unlicensed and are doing electrical work without knowing the dangers involved. The voltage most electrocutions are caused by is 120 volts, not high voltage. The average available fault current (current produced when shorting hot to ground) at any point in a residential home is 1000 amps. It takes 5 thousandths of an amp to kill an adult and even less for children. - It's the lack of regulation over unlicensed people such as handymen that causes the problems. A similar illustration would be: I don't have a drivers license so you can't fine or penalize me for driving under the influence, running a stop light or speeding. - The lack of requiring a license to do work covered by the NEC. Why wouldn't work that is required to have a permit and is covered by the NEC not require a license? The low voltage industry obviously has a good lobby. - Allowing home owners to do wiring. I think if the service size is above 100 amps it should be done by licensed electricians. - Letting oil refineries use nonlicensed electricians for new construction. The scope of this work covered in the NEC is enormous and in some sections listed as hazardous. Seems strange that we require licensing for wiring a 500 sq ft addition to a commercial building, but something as hazardous as an oil refinery can be wired by anyone.- When the Electrical Board is able to levy a fine against a violator, the fine goes to the General Fund of Montana. The Board and its licensees expend the money for lawyers and staff and ultimately the General Fund gets the money. What this results in is increased license fees for licensees to recover our costs. The law should be changed so Boards can recover costs and anything left over from fines can go to the General Fund.- Continuing education. Not all classes are recognized, causing licensing delays & fines. - Requiring where one gets their education and not recognizing that some people have gained experience through an apprenticeship. - The Laws that create so many different Boards that overlap. - *None* - 4 (Anything the board has adopted that I can think of has been to the betterment of the industry. Another commented the laws should be tougher.)

Complaints filed? No - 27 Yes - 3 **Board Effective?** - **No** 5 *Optional Resolution* - The board and its staff should have the authority to get law enforcement involved and have the violators removed from the job. If a restaurant is operating a bar without a liquor license and they are caught they will be shut down and fined. - Complaint involved a Missoula company that had over 300 unresolved "red tags" and the board ruled it would be a financial hardship for them to have to correct. The city had to pay half a million dollars or so to pay the same firm to repair their own shoddy work. However the board has changed members and the new ones are much better. Board effective - Dropped the matter. Provided several instances of commercial wiring without licensed employees, and the investigation unit was understaffed and would not follow through **Yes:** IBEW did a petition to the board to keep our work out of the hands of other trades people. Not just anyone should be allowed to do the job of an electrician no matter how small the job. The board did see it our way and backed us. However, a board member should be required to know the trade inside and out and know what they are working for and how things work.

Other comments: Board scope just right because it covers the things pertinent to the trade.

Nonlicensee comments

Saying State Electrical Board Necessary for Public Health - 25, Public Safety - 49, Public Welfare - 2
a combination of two reasons - 43; all three reasons listed - 43

* As of April 4, 2012