

Responses to Survey - Board of Plumbers

Total responses:* 20 as of April 4, 2012

Highest Compliment	<i>Monitor profession for licensees- 9 Streamline continuing education - 3 Avoid criticism due to bad actors- 1 None - 6 Other - 0</i>			
Biggest Complaint	<p><i>Licensing fees too high - 11 Lack of Information - 0 Regulations too strict - 1 Response to unlicensed practice - 10 None - 5</i></p> <p><i>Other:</i> It costs over \$600 to be licensed as a journeyman. Continuing education requirements. Requiring a master plumber's license to operate a business. Need to look at other states that have options for journeyman who wish to be owner-operators. Require tax info when individuals are applying for plumbing license -- those being honest about time spent working are at the losing end of the dishonesty of masters that sign off on unqualified apprentices seeking journeyman status. The board lacks applied common sense, professional conduct, accountability and field experience. They are an embarrassment to the governor and the trade they represent. - If the fees remain what they are now, continuing education should be provided by the Board of Plumbers as no extra expense. - The board has failed at all aspects the above listed categories.- The board has lost control of what it is doing.</p>			
<p>Reasons the board is important: Other: Protection of public health and maintenance of required sanitation. Helps to ensure that the people of Montana have a qualified pool of plumbing professionals to choose from that help protect the drinking water of Montana. I believe it is important for plumbers to meet certain standards in their work. These standards help to ensure that people receive quality plumbing that can be worked on or repaired by another plumber. Accountability and enforcement are the underlining issues for having a board. However the Board of Plumbers needs to be more involved when work is being performed on state property. The city does its best but they do not know how to determine proper venting, cross connections or flat out code violations. We need this accountability on our campus here in Bozeman. The noncompliant work is inexcusable, and costing the state a bundle in labor. We as campus plumbers should not have to go in and repair or replace what the contractor did wrong. Things that I mention might be new to those who are reading it, I appreciate the work you do and understand you have many things on your agenda but legislation to remedy the issues I mentioned above could save all of us money. Although Gallatin County seems to be flooded with out-of-work plumbers right now, the Board of Plumbers is important in regulating the number of plumbers in Montana. Too many plumbers = low pay, low work, high unemployment. - If anything we need more enforcement. A lot of projects are being done that could very well create severe health problems. (e.g. from e-coli and methane gas). Unfortunately it will take a severe problem before something will be done. In my opinion it is only a matter of time. - Provide inspectors to help us with the practical application of the code. - I believe that the board should be able to govern and levy fines on those who continue to practice plumbing without a license. - There are too many people who think they know what they are doing. By the time someone notices a problem it is too late. We all have seen improper installations that have, or could have health and safety ramifications from improper practices. With a board we can help to stop these types of problems by giving the board a wider variance to also regulate non licensed people performing this work. - It's OK the way it stands right now, just need better enforcement of what it is trying to regulate. The code issues are administered very well as of right now, but there are too many unlicensed people that are not dealt with because of lack of enforcement. - The Board of Plumbers is also important to private home owners, as they also need to have regulation of how their plumbing is installed and by licensed plumbers.</p>				
Public Health - 5	Public Welfare -	Public Safety -	All or combination - 9	None of these - 4
Problems with other professions' scope of practice? Y- 1 No - 19		Too Narrow - 5	Too Broad - 1	Just Right - 12
<p>Scope of Practice Concerns - Non enforcement of unlicensed practice complaints is the rule. Board is mired in procedural process and allows the department to set policy. We will not allow people to cut into a water line without a license for fear of polluting the drinking water, however, anyone with a wrench can install gas piping without proving any competence in the trade. With all the recent explosions around the state, I think that gas piping should fall under plumbing licensure to help protect Montanans from faulty gas pipe installations. We need more enforcement in construction by home owners. when home owners build their own home they should need to have the same requirements that a contractor needs, get a permit and have work inspected to code, so when home is resold it shouldn't have to be a buyer's problems if not installed properly. They have no authority and what authority they do have is too</p>				

Scope of Practice Concerns, continued: limited to be effective unless you have a license. Nothing gets done until it's too late. There is potential for catastrophe in the hydronic heating and gas piping trades, which should be regulated to licensed plumbers. Non-licensed workers should be stopped from heating and gas piping. - For Consumer Protection the state needs to protect consumers from manufacturer installs of water and sewer systems as they do not help the consumer. We have had several systems hooked up in White Sulphur that have blown apart. the homes are designed for 60 psi max. We have over 100 psi city pressure or more. The state law says if over 80 psi a pressure-reducing valve must be installed. We do on every job. I have been stuck for costs as most people who are buying the homes are stretched in their budget and cannot afford the costs. Why do those companies not need to follow the same rules as a plumber? Also water softeners etc can be installed improperly but are exempt from the law. I have seen discharge lines direct into sewer lines at toilet - talk about e-coli. - The end product needs to be safe. - I believe hydronic heating should be looked at. I have come across too many systems that should have never been allowed to be powered up due to the wrong installation practice. - Provided the required regulations are indicated to all Montana licensed plumbers ahead of a change, there are no problems following the regulations.

What laws/regulations have caused the most problems? -- None. - 3 Continuing education. (2 responses) Other: Fee increases. Exemptions from the defined "field of plumbing" [and] allowing unlicensed people to install fuel gas[, which] has resulted in loss of life and property in increasing numbers. The most problems I have are with individuals who are not licensed and are performing plumbing, however, due to the fact that they are not licensed means that we do not have any jurisdiction over them. So we file a complaint, the unlicensed individual gets a cease & desist letter which they promptly laugh at and the licensee pays for the Department's legal team. The licensee spends money trying to protect the public through legal means with no way of recouping money spent to police his/her industry because of unlicensed individuals. Seems ironic, does it not? At times, I have found it difficult to find a course that is relevant to new or changing plumbing information. It seems kind of silly to ask us to take a course about something that hasn't changed since we have become licensed. Every now and then we get an overzealous inspector but that's about it. Small town Montana always shuts down anything of commonsense from the big city. The outsourcing of the plumber's exam (and ALL the extra costs to me), while making more test dates per year, was unnecessary, in my opinion. If my license fees didn't cover the costs for exams, there must be too many people in the office. More overhead = less profit - cut the fat. - Written codes are sufficient. - Possibility the veto of the bill on residential sprinklers that will cost lots of money in the rural areas where water volume is not available.- Cost and frequency of continuing education. Since the code changes every 3 years, I believe that we should only need continuing education at the same interval. The cost should be included in the license fees. - Not being able to regulate the non licensed installer or plumber. - Governing unlicensed people. - The homeowners' exemption is the biggest cause for unlicensed people doing work without a license

Consumer complaint filed No 9 Yes 2. Board was effective = 2; not effective = 2 . Explanations: 1) Wrote a letter and not effective. The board needs to support the licensed contractor and work with not against. - 2) When I worked as an inspector and addressed unlicensed people the board did nothing but write a letter saying "you need to stop" rather than prosecuting them. The board dropped the matter.

Other comments: - In relation to complaint: Should have attended board meetings, contacted legislators and interim committees, met with board members and industry groups. - The inspectors of the state have enforcement authority but do not use it !!!

Nonlicensee comments**

Other respondents saying the board is necessary for public health- 20; public safety - 45; public welfare - 13 (single responses), two reasons - 26, all three reasons - 41.