

Electricians Consumer Fact Sheet

Board of State Examiners of Electricians and Electricians Appeals

The Board of State Examiners of Electricians, one of 26 state licensing boards within the Division of Occupational Licensure, licenses Master Electricians (A), Journeyman Electricians (B), Fire Warning and Security System Contractors (C) and Fire Warning and Security System Technicians (D). The Board also assists local wiring inspectors in mediating code disputes between licensees and wiring inspectors.

The primary mission of the Board is to protect the citizens of Massachusetts by establishing minimum standards for persons performing electrical installations. It accomplishes this mission by examining and licensing candidates and by enforcing the regulations and general laws relative to electrical installations in Massachusetts. The Board also prosecutes those found to be working without a license, either through the Office of the Attorney General or directly in the courts of the Commonwealth.

The Board performs fire investigations under the direction of the State Fire Marshal to determine if electricity could have contributed to the cause. While performing these fire investigations, the Board checks the installation(s) for code compliance and possible licensee misconduct.

The Board also oversees Division of Occupational Licensure electrical inspectors who inspect electrical work on roads, railways, bridges and tunnels installed by state transportation agencies.

The Board of Electricians' Appeals issues informal opinions and conducts formal hearings in matters of dispute based upon decisions rendered by local wiring inspectors.

Licensed Electricians and Systems Personnel

Only a master or journeyman electrician licensed by the Board of State Examiners of Electricians can be legally hired to perform electrical work at your home or business. Only licensed systems contractors or technicians can be legally hired to install or repair security or fire alarm systems.

A **master electrician** may work either as an individual, a firm, or a corporation. A master electrician must maintain a regular place of business where the current license is displayed. The master electrician may employ journeymen and apprentices.

A **journeyman electrician** is qualified by education and experience and works as an individual in performing electrical work. State regulations require that a journeyman carry a license and display it upon request.

A **systems contractor** may work as an individual, a firm, or a corporation. A systems contractor must maintain a regular place of business where the current license is plainly displayed. The systems contractor may employ systems technicians or apprentices to install, repair or maintain fire warning and security systems.

A **systems technician** is qualified by education and experience and works as an individual with fire warning and security systems. State regulations require that a systems technician carry a license and display it upon request.

Special Note

It is a violation of board regulations for a licensed electrician or systems technician to connect wiring from components that have been wired by an unlicensed person.

Electrical Safety

Electricity handled improperly can cause shock and injury. Overheated wires, appliances or fixtures can result in fire. Make safety inspections a regular routine, and be sure that all wiring is installed and inspected by a licensed electrician.

Home Safety

According to the U.S. Consumer Products Safety Commission (CPSC) about 200 people die from electrocution each year. Deaths from residential fires run close to 700 annually. Each year about 3,000 people are treated in hospital emergency rooms for injuries associated with electricity. Almost 10,000 fires result from damaged or overloaded cords and plugs each year.

Consumers can take steps to protect themselves from accident and injury.

- Have a licensed electrician install Ground Fault Circuit Interrupters (GFCI) outdoors, in bathrooms, kitchens, or in any location where electrical appliances or products come in contact with water. Nearly all electrocutions involving consumer products could be prevented by using GFCIs.
- Unplug appliances before cleaning them. Never plug in or unplug an electric cord while your hands are wet. Keep appliances like radios, TVs, and hair dryers away from sinks and bathtubs.
- Don't overload outlets and extension cords.
- Don't yank the cord when unplugging appliances; grasp the plug firmly and pull.
- Be sure the proper wattage light bulbs are used in light fixtures and lamps.

- Examine electrical cords to make sure they aren't frayed or damaged. Do not place electrical cords under rugs or carpets.
 - Make sure the batteries in your smoke detectors are working. Test smoke detectors regularly.
 - Repair any appliance that smokes, sparks or shocks you.
 - Teach children not to put things into electrical outlets. Protect your children from injury by using plastic outlet guards.
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Consumer Tips for Choosing an Electrician or Systems Contractor

- Hire a licensed professional. Call the Board of State Examiners of Electricians at (617) 701-8786 to verify licensure, the number of years licensed, and the licensee's complaint history. Or, do your own [verification](#) on the internet.
A master or journeyman electrician's license type and number must be shown on any sign, listing, or advertisement.
 - Ask to see a copy of the licensee's liability insurance. Insurance is required by state law and reputable professionals carry it.
 - Get more than one bid for your job. Competition promotes fairness.
 - Call several companies. Get referrals from friends, family or neighbors. Contact a trade association for a list of member companies in your area.
 - Agree in writing to the scope and price of the work to be completed.
 - Ask to see the permit. This permit is your guarantee that the work will be inspected and that the professional is responsible for the work performed.
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Filing a Complaint

While the majority of licensees conduct themselves as true professionals, the Division of Occupational Licensure will take action against those who fail to maintain acceptable standards of competence and integrity.

In many cases, complaints are made by dissatisfied consumers - but, dissatisfaction alone is not proof of incompetence or sufficient grounds for disciplinary action. Cases are evaluated on the basis of evidence. Evidence includes the contract, the electrical permit and cancelled checks. The more written evidence presented, the stronger the complaint.

If you have a serious complaint against a licensed electrician or systems technician or contractor, call or write the Division's Office of Investigations and ask for a complaint form. Or download a copy of the [complaint form](#) .

Division of Occupational Licensure
Office of Investigations
1000 Washington Street, Suite 710
Boston, Mass. 02118
(617) 727-7406

Trade Associations

For more information about Fire Alarm and Security Systems or Electrical Contractors contact:

Massachusetts Systems Contractors Association, Inc.

1 Merchant Street, Suite 112
Sharon, MA 02067-1662
(781) 784-2102

Massachusetts Electrical Contractors

Association (MECA)
105 Eastern Avenue,
Suite 212
Dedham, MA 02026
(617) 320-9811