

Construction Industry Communication #37

From: Amit Ghosh, Chief Building Official
Re: Primary and Secondary Service Distribution; Site Lighting Installation
Date: August 3, 2010

Background: Historically, primary and secondary electrical service has been provided and installed by the local utility companies and regulated by the Public Utilities Commission of Ohio (PUCO). In the late 1990's and early 2000's, the City of Columbus became aware that private contractors were beginning to supply and install distribution services in lieu of the utility companies. A preliminary procedure was established to allow this process to be performed within the intent of the code. The former Chief Building Official (CBO), Joseph F. Busch, permitted private contractors to perform this work per National Electric Safety Code (NESC) requirements in accordance with The National Electrical Code, Article 90-2 (c), "Special Permission". There were guidelines established on how this work was to be performed. Unfortunately, those guidelines were not adhered to and work was installed without any regulatory oversight.

Memorandum: At this time, the City of Columbus has established a written procedure for the installation of this work being performed by private contractors. The process is as follows:

- If not a utility or registered and overseen by the PUCO, the contractor must be licensed to perform work (licensed by State and registered with City of Columbus).
- Must ask for relief in writing of National Electrical Code (NEC) standards in accordance to exception provision in NEC 90-2 (C) to the Chief Building Official (CBO) for each site-specific project.
- Exception to NEC requirements will only apply to primary and secondary service distribution if approved by CBO.
- All site lighting being supplied from building services will be required to meet NEC standards with plan approval, permits and inspections by the electrical inspection department.
- Separate electrical permits will be required for site primary service, each building secondary service and site lighting supplied by building services.
- Design documents and 3rd party report shall be emailed to electricinfo@columbus.gov upon completion and prior to any electric building finals being obtained. No work shall be started until proper permits are obtained as outlined below.

Permits shall be obtained as follows:

1, 2 and 3 Family Dwellings

Primary Distribution/ Issued as a residential electrical "2 Inspection Permit" per current fee schedule.

Secondary Distribution (each building) / Issued as a residential electrical "Minor Work Permit" per current fee schedule.

Multi-Family Dwellings (4 or more Family)

Primary Distribution/ Issued as a multi-family electrical "2 Inspection Permit" per current fee schedule.

Secondary Distribution (each building) / Issued as a multi-family electrical "Minor Work Permit" per current fee schedule.

Commercial/Mixed Use

Primary Distribution / Issued as a commercial electrical "2 Inspection Permit" per current fee schedule.

Secondary Distribution (each building) Issued as a commercial electrical "Minor Work Permit" per current fee schedule.

- Inspections for primary and secondary distribution will be performed by a third party-certified entity schooled in NESC standards and approved by the CBO. Inspection reports performed by the approved third party entity must clearly indicate conformance to design documents and shall be submitted to the attention of the CBO, in writing, prior to issuance of a Certificate of Occupancy. Third party inspection service credentials shall be submitted for approval with the application for permit. If changes are made in the field as compared to the design documents submitted, the report will note the design changes and the design engineer will note their approval.
- Site lighting permit work supplied by building services will be designed, installed and inspected per NEC standards. Inspections will be performed by the electrical inspection staff of the Columbus Department of Building and Zoning Services.

If you have any questions regarding the intent or content of this communication, please contact the Electrical Inspection Supervisor, at 614-645-6076 or Chief Building Official, at 614-645-6416.

Revised 5/15/2025