

CONFIDENTIAL
LEGISLATIVE BILL REVIEW FORM: 2015

Bill Number: H.108 **Name of Bill:** Electrical Installations

Agency/Dept: Fire Safety **Author of Bill Review:** Representative Shaw & Representative Stevens

Date of Bill Review: 03/13/2015 **Related Bills and Key Players:** No other related Bill- Solar Industry

Status of Bill: (check one)

Upon Introduction **As passed by 1st body** **As passed by both bodies**

Recommended Position:

Support **Oppose** **Remain Neutral** **Support with modifications identified in # 8 below**

Analysis of Bill

- 1. Summary of bill and issue it addresses.** The bill has 2 main components as listed below;
- **Reenergizing structures after an emergency Disconnection 26 V.S.A. § 894:** This bill would prohibit the re-energizing of an existing electrical system in any structure disconnected as a result of an emergency that affects the internal electrical wiring until inspected by a licensed electrician and deemed safe to energize. Currently existing law prohibits utility companies from re-energizing buildings defined as a “complex structure” until our electrical inspector issues a temporary or permanent energizing permit. This section of the bill would only impact single family owner occupied freestanding dwellings. Public Electrical Utility companies are very reluctant to re-introduce electricity into a damaged building unless the wiring has been deemed safe by an electrician. Some utilities have written policy while others have unwritten policy.
 - **License Not Required 26 V.S.A. § 910:** Current law allows anyone to do wiring in a single- family owner occupied freestanding dwelling and a 1& 2 family dwelling (duplex). This bill proposes to require a journeyman electrician, if anyone, other than the home owner does wiring in a single-family owner occupied freestanding dwelling or 1 & 2 family dwelling. The Division under current law requires an electrical work notice to be filed for all wiring in a 1 & 2 family dwelling however, the electrical work notice can be submitted by anyone but a State electrical inspector inspects the wiring. 26 V.S.A. would be modified to reflect this change.

2. Is there a need for this bill?

- This bill is supported in that it promotes electrical safety in our most vulnerable residential occupancies. The majority of all our fire deaths are in residential occupancies and most of them in owner occupied homes. This bill promotes electrical safety following disasters and provides home owners some level of consumer protection by requiring an electrical license for those people who are hired to do electrical work. The bill would provide for safer heating system wiring in single family owner occupied freestanding dwellings. The shortfall is there is no enforcement mechanism in place for the single family homes. I have provided testimony on the bill for two years and have made it clear we certainly have no available resources to be engaged in single family homes we cannot keep up with our current work load.

3. What are likely to be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for this Department? There are minor programmatic implications as we manage and administer electrical licensing.

4. What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for other departments in state government, and what is likely to be their perspective on it? There would be no programmatic implications on other departments.

5. What might be the fiscal and programmatic implications of this bill for others, and what is likely to be their perspective on it?

- **Solar Installers:** Under current law solar installers can wire in single-family owner occupied freestanding homes and 1 & 2 family dwellings without an electrical license. This bill proposes to require a Journeyman license for electrical wiring completed in a single family owner occupied freestanding dwelling and 1 & 2 family dwelling if the wiring is completed by someone other than the building owner. The solar industry last year opposed this bill claiming they would be put out of business if an electrical license was required for these type of residential installations as they were unregulated. Anticipating this bill would be reintroduced this year the electrical licensing board created a journeyman Type-S License specifically for solar installers. The new Type S license would be issued to all existing solar installers without testing provided they had 2 years of documented work under a nationally accredited organization or pro-board certification approved by the board. This bill provides a 2 year sunset allowing ample time for new installers to work for 2 years so they can apply and take the exam. Vermont Technical College will provide continuing education to the solar installers. The big advantage for the solar industry moving forward would be the flexibility for solar installers who have a Type S License to install systems in commercial and public buildings without having to coordinate and sub out work to licensed master electricians. This would open the field to the industry and would bring needed conformity to the field.
- **Unlicensed Contractors:** Although we have not heard opposition from contractors, I know we have contractors performing electrical wiring without a license. In fact, we issue administrative penalties and warnings when we identify unlicensed people engaged in wiring.
- **Home Owners:** Most home owners know someone who can wire a home although it may not be to code it saves the owner money.

6. Other Stakeholders:

6.1 Who else is likely to support the proposal and why? Electrical Licensing Board, public utilities, the Vermont fire service, home owners, electrical contractors and insurance companies. This bill would provide an elevated level of safety in residential properties.

6.2 Who else is likely to oppose the proposal and why? There would be no enforcement process in place for electrical wiring in a single family owner occupied freestanding dwelling under this bill. There is also the philosophical difference in opinions regarding regulating single family owner occupied dwellings in the Vermont Legislature. Additionally, some home owners may oppose this as many homes are wired by friends without licenses.

7. Rationale for recommendation: The bill provides for safer electrical installations and provides the public utilities with a law to fall back on when re-energizing damaged electrical systems. The bill addresses the issue of electrical licensing in complex structures (1 & 2 Family Dwellings). Currently we require licenses in apartment buildings (3-residential units and above) but exempt licensing in a duplex. The majority of duplex type structures are wired by licensed electricians now thus this would bring a more consistent application to the electrical safety rules. A Journeyman License is not easy to obtain and takes thousands of hours of documented work and the passing of an exam. Journeyman electricians are very capable and skilled at electrical wiring and we should recognize their ability.

8. Specific modifications that would be needed to recommend support of this bill: The bill in general has minimal impact on our division. We have remained neutral on the wiring requirement for single family owner occupied freestanding dwellings.

9. Gubernatorial appointments to board or commission?

Secretary/Commissioner has reviewed this document

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'K. [unclear]', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Date: 4/6/15