
Labor & Workplace Standards Committee

ESSB 5320

Brief Description: Concerning journey level electrician certifications of competency.

Sponsors: Senate Committee on Labor & Commerce (originally sponsored by Senators Saldaña, Keiser, King, Randall and Wilson, C.).

Brief Summary of Engrossed Substitute Bill

- Modifies the eligibility requirements for obtaining journey level electrician certification.
- Establishes a temporary pathway for current trainees to obtain journey level electrician certification without completing an apprenticeship program through July 1, 2026.

Hearing Date: 3/22/23

Staff: Kelly Leonard (786-7147).

Background:

An electrical contractor license is required to engage in the business of installing or maintaining wires or equipment to convey electric current, or equipment to be operated by electric current. A person must have a journey level or specialty electrician certificate of competency in order to work as an electrician. To obtain a certificate of competency, a person must complete certain requirements and pass an examination. The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) issues licenses and certificates of competency and otherwise administers the regulation of electricians and electrical work. L&I may enter a reciprocal agreement with another state to accept the credentials of the other state if the requirements are equal to Washington's standards.

This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.

In 2018, the state passed Substitute Senate Bill 6126, which modified the eligibility requirements for taking the examination for a journey level electrician certificate of competency, effective July 1, 2023.

Until July 1, 2023, there are two primary pathways for obtaining certification as a journey level electrician, either by completing a certain number of hours of work experience with classroom training, or by completing an apprenticeship program. For the first pathway, a person must work in the electrical construction trade for at least 8,000 hours under the supervision of a certified electrician, of which at least 4,000 hours must be spent working in commercial or industrial installations, and meet classroom training requirements. Experience in the electrical construction trade in the military, or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs, may be credited towards the required hours of work experience. For the second pathway, a person must complete an apprenticeship program approved by the Washington Apprenticeship and Training Council (WATC).

Beginning July 1, 2023, these two pathways are merged, and any applicant must complete an apprenticeship program approved by WATC or equivalent apprenticeship program approved by L&I. The program must include at least 8,000 hours of work in the electrical construction trade under the supervision of a certified electrician, of which at least 4,000 hours must be spent working in commercial or industrial installations. Experience in the electrical construction trade in the military, or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs, may be credited towards work hours required by the apprenticeship program.

From July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, L&I may permit an applicant who obtained experience and training equivalent to a journey level apprenticeship program if the applicant had good cause for not completing the minimum hours of work under the new standards.

Summary of Bill:

The eligibility requirements for obtaining certification as a journey level electrician are modified. Beginning July 1, 2023, a person is eligible to take the examination for a certificate of competency through any one of the following pathways:

- completing an apprenticeship program approved by WATC, including work experience and education requirements of an 8,000 hour electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations, experience in the electrical construction trade in the military, or up to two years of classroom work in certain school programs may be credited towards work hours required by the apprenticeship program;
- completing an apprenticeship program in another jurisdiction equivalent to an apprenticeship program approved by WATC, including work experience and education requirements of an 8,000 hour electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations;
- having an out-of-state journey level electrician certification obtained through examination

by a state licensing jurisdiction requiring at least 8,000 hours of supervised experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations, provided that all experience applied toward qualifying for the examination must have been gained in the state that issued the certificate or in the military;

- having at least 16,000 hours of out-of-state experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations; or
- having 8,000 hours of experience in the electrical construction trade installing and maintaining electrical wiring and equipment while serving in a construction battalion in the military.

The temporary authority, from July 1, 2023, until July 1, 2025, for L&I to permit applicants to take the examination without completing certain requirements based on good cause is removed. Instead, until July 1, 2026, L&I must permit a person issued an electrical training certificate to gain the experience required to qualify for the examination without requiring the person to register in an apprenticeship program if the person either had 3,000 hours of lawful experience working in the electrical construction trade before July 1, 2023, or completed a two-year training school program before July 1, 2023. Under either circumstance, the person may take the examination without completing an apprenticeship program if he or she has 8,000 hours of lawful experience working in the electrical construction trade, of which 4,000 hours must be new industrial or commercial electrical installations.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect on July 1, 2023.