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## **NECA files licensing complaints against solar farm project; temp workers not licensed as electricians allegedly installing electrical components**

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Unlicensed, unqualified temporary workers are allegedly installing conductive solar electric components in violation of state law at a large solar farm in south-central Massachusetts.

The National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Boston (NECA) has made the allegations in three separate complaints recently filed with the Massachusetts Division of Professional Licensure. NECA Boston claims a company's employees, who are not licensed as electricians, with assistance from unlicensed counterparts, are erecting electrical components - including racks, rails and conduit - of a solar photovoltaic (PV) facility. Massachusetts General Law Chapter 141 and the Massachusetts Electrical Code, bolstered by several advisories from the Board of State Examiners of Electricians, require licensed electricians and licensed electrical contractors to install solar PV power systems, among other electrical apparatuses.

"Solar PV arrays generate electricity and pose the same dangers of electrocution or fire as any other electrical system would," said NECA Boston executive director Glenn Kingsbury. "That is why Massachusetts law, state regulators and the National Electrical Code, which govern our industry, mandate that licensed electricians handle installation of these systems and the life-threatening voltages they produce."

NECA Boston initially grew suspicious after viewing an Oct. 12 Craigslist posting by a staffing company for "general laborers installing solar panels." A call to the staffing company confirmed the \$10 per hour positions were in Southbridge for a subcontractor. According to Kingsbury, a member of his staff visited the site Oct. 25 and photographed the alleged violations. He also spoke to contractors and workers there who confirmed unlicensed workers were handling conductive rail, racking and conduit installations, which can only be done by licensed electricians.

Town inspection officials have issued permits in error for the unlicensed electrical activities, as well as an electrical permit to an employee of an electrical firm, who is a licensed electrician. The staffing company and the solar company laborers, however, are not working as electrical company's employees or under direct supervision as a licensed electrician. NECA Boston filed its latest complaint against the electrical company, as that business presumably assumes full responsibility for all electrical work under its permit. A venture from Chevy Chase, Md., owns the development and San Francisco company is the lead contractor.

"NECA Boston supports renewable energy when it is safely implemented by properly trained and licensed individuals. We would normally applaud the Southbridge developers if they were indeed using a licensed electrical contractor instead of staffing agencies and out-of-state firms that are unfamiliar with applicable statutes and managing the project with an installation team that is unlicensed in Massachusetts as electricians," said Kingsbury. "Cutting corners and breaking the law

with low-wage, short-term jobs is not the answer to our nation's economic and environmental woes and - most importantly - undermines public safety."

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