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The importance of keeping photovoltaic installations in the hands of licensed electricians

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In the past year, there has been considerable discussion in the Commonwealth relating to the qualifications necessary to efficiently and safely install photovoltaic (PV) systems. NECA Boston Chapter has been vocal in our support of regulations that affirm that solar installations are indeed electrical installations and therefore must be installed by trained and licensed professionals.

For the users of photovoltaic systems, business and residential customers alike, it is critical that those who perform PV installations have the proper training and experience and that oversight is provided by wire inspectors that examine the electrical installations. It is, quite simply, a matter of protecting public safety as well as having assurance for the end-user that an appropriate, quality solar installation has been provided. The installation of photovoltaic power systems is well covered by what has long been State law in Massachusetts - M.G.L. Ch. 141S 1. The statute is straightforward and specifying that only licensed electricians may install "wires, conduits, apparatus, fixtures or other appliances for carrying or using electricity for light, heat or power purposes." The statute certainly applies to the installation of photovoltaic systems, which require wiring to enable the conversion of sunlight into electricity used to light, heat and power our homes, educational facilities, and businesses.

For the last 94 years, the members of the National Electrical Contractors Association of Greater Boston (NECA) have abided by the regulations of the State Examiners of Electricians. We have gained the necessary training and experience to qualify as "Master Electricians." In a recent ruling, The Massachusetts Board of State Examiners of Electricians (BEEE) has reinstated its determination that photovoltaic systems in Massachusetts are required to be installed, repaired and maintained only by a licensed journeyman electrician or a properly supervised apprentice. It is a determination that will serve the Commonwealth and its citizens well.

NECA and our electrical industry partners, the IBEW, are well prepared to meet the increasing demand for photovoltaic installations. We have, for years, been training apprentices and journeymen electricians in photovoltaics. The contractors of our association have adeptly performed dozens of solar installations. These PV projects and many others that are underway by our experienced contractors, will continue to positively impact the business community and residential customers throughout the region for years to come. They are projects that have been and will be installed to meet all Electrical Codes and specifications. We applaud the State Board of Electrical Examiners for their recent ruling that confirms that PV system installations be handled by properly trained personnel, and with the oversight of electrical examiners and wire inspectors. NECA looks forward to continuing to build a safer, brighter and renewable future for Massachusetts.

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