

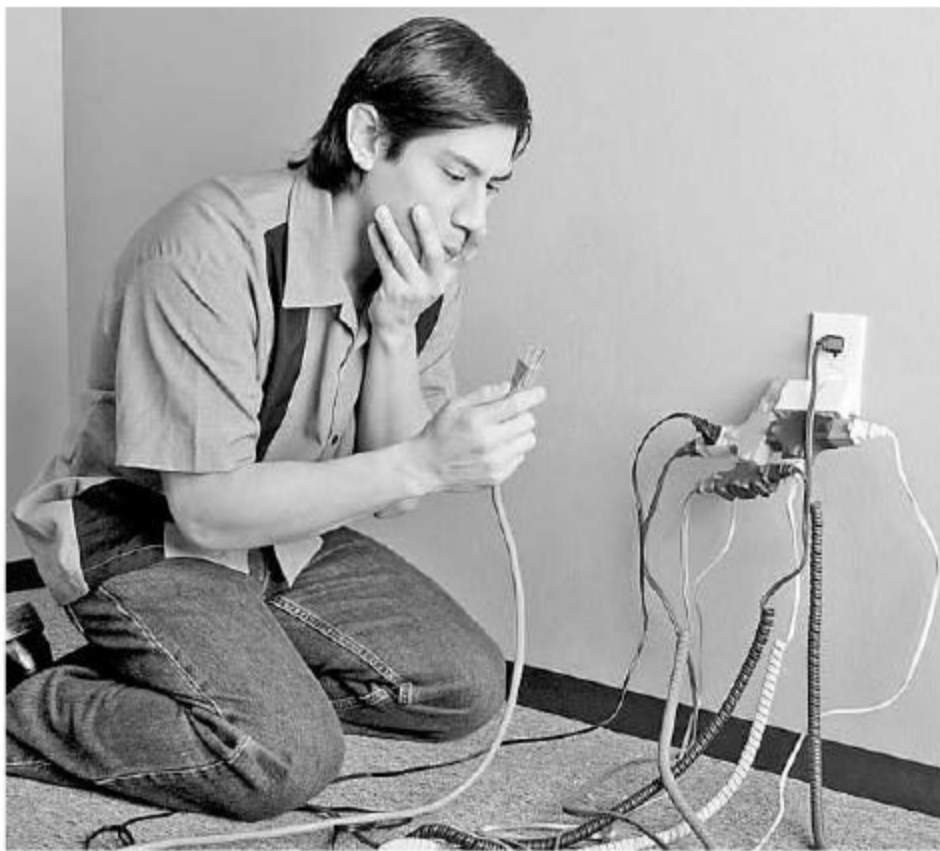
Electrical Contractors: Ask questions before and *save headaches later!*

By **TOM SZYMANSKI**
Plus 5/IBEW 725
Electrical Contractors

According to the latest data from the U.S. Fire Administration, "home electrical wiring causes twice as many fires as electrical appliances" and "most electrical fires result from problems with fixed wiring such as faulty electrical outlets and old wiring." As a result, you as a customer in considering any new home construction or remodeling project should be aware of the different factors that affect a safe and properly installed electrical system.

To make sure you aren't included as part of the yearly 67,800 home fires, 485 deaths, or \$868 million in property loss due to faulty wiring, verify the type of training and education the contractor provides to its electrical workers. Many times, consumers seeking an electrical contractor only look at the lowest bid while ignoring the skill level and training of its employees.

Why is this important? The main reason is that Indiana does not have state electrical licensing and most people are unaware of this fact. Plumbers, beauticians, and hypnotists are only a few of the occupations that are required to be licensed by the state, yet individual electricians are not! Bloomington falls under the Monroe County electrical licensing ordinance, but this license is



for the contractors/business owners only. There are no requirements to verify the qualifications

of the employees performing the actual electrical work in your home.

Find out if employees

are currently in or graduated from a registered electrical apprenticeship program with the Bureau

of Apprenticeship and Training. Apprenticeship provides classroom and on-the-job training to employees insuring they receive an education in electrical theory, OSHA safety standards, and the National Electrical Code. Anyone can be instructed step-by-step on what to do, but it takes another level of knowledge to understand why and how to install electrical panels and wiring, i.e., safely and by code from start to finish.

Make sure your contractor has the proper and up to date insurance and bonding requirements, and not just for liability and property damage. Workers' Compensation and Unemployment insurance should be included. This not only protects you as a homeowner, but helps verify the workers are bona fide employees and not individuals subcontracted out by the contractor. Insurance and bonding documents

should be readily available. If it becomes apparent that there is a delay or an "issue" to secure these documents, this should raise a red flag and you may want to look at another contractor.

Finally, always ask for references and follow up with them. Ask about the quality of the final job and responsiveness to questions. Was the job completed on time and on budget? Were there many "add-ons" as the job progressed (which raises a red flag as to why the original bid may have been so low!) and did the workers act as professionally as expected?

Hiring an electrical contractor can be complicated or easy, depending on how you want the final job completed: cheap and quick, or safely and professionally. If you do your homework and ask the right questions, the time invested now will be worth the time saved in headaches later!

Who Are The Contractors & Electrical Workers of Local 725?

812-877-IBEW

We're your friends, we're your neighbors and we're your customers.
A thousand families living, working and helping to make our corner of the world a little brighter.

SkilledAndSafe.com

NECA
ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS

ELECTRICAL WORKERS LOCAL 725

WT-6181866