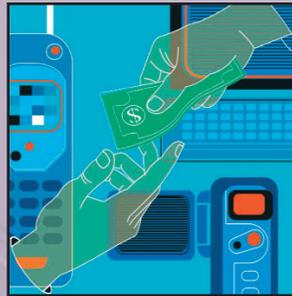


# THIS IS NECA

NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION



**GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS**



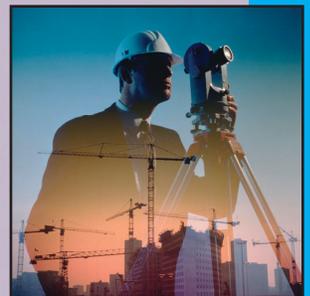
**MARKETING**



**LABOR RELATIONS**



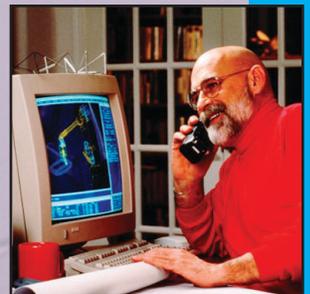
**MANAGEMENT EDUCATION**



**CODES & STANDARDS**



**SAFETY**



**COMMUNICATIONS**

# CONTENTS

This publication attempts to answer some of the questions you may have about the National Electrical Contractors Contractors. Here’s a list of these questions – and where you can find the answers. For additional information, please consult your NECA chapter office. Or visit online at <http://necanet.org>.

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# INTRODUCTION

The electrical construction industry was still in its infancy when a group of farsighted men came together to establish what would become the National Electrical Contractors Association. The industry can be said to have been born in 1879 when Thomas Alva Edison changed the course of history by introducing a successful carbon incandescent lamp. In fact, many of the first electrical contractors rose from the ranks of employment in the Edison Electric Illuminating Companies that were formed around the country. Other early contractors began by working for the telephone companies or for the forerunners of public utilities, which were set up to power electric street cars. As far as can be determined, the first official electrical contracting business opened shop in New York City in 1882. Soon, hundreds of other electrical contracting companies sprung up in major cities across the continent.

Trade associations began to flourish at about this same time, partly in order to represent management interests in response to the growing organized labor movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Local associations of electrical contractors were established to meet the needs that could not be met by individual contractors working alone. Working in cooperation allowed the contractors to share tools and skilled workers – both of which were in short supply in those early days – and to exchange ideas and information, just as association members do today. Banding together also helped contractors gain a greater say in the development of local business ordinances. One of the first local associations of electrical contractors was founded in New York City in 1892.

Local groups lacked the strength and unified voice necessary to deal with some big issues, however. Among these:

- 1.** Lack of uniformity in manufacturing specifications for equipment and components hampered progress, as did the absence of consistent installation procedures. Assembly-line production techniques had not yet been developed for many items used in interior construction, so it was not unusual for a project to come to a halt for weeks or months when the electrical contractor had to order a one-of-a-kind junction box or bushing specially made to fit one particular job. And, when a contractor was called upon to retrofit or redo an installation originally done by another company, it was often more expedient to tear out all or most of the wiring and start over from scratch, rather than try to duplicate methods with which the contractor was unfamiliar. The fact that contractors often traveled across state borders to work on large projects compounded this problem. And, because there was no standard “protocol,” contractors were often in dispute with architects and draftsmen whose drawings failed to specify procedures in any consistent manner.
- 2.** Inconsistency was also a keynote of the laws and regulations governing electrical construction. In fact, very few laws addressed the trade at all. It is true that the National Electrical Code had come into existence in 1897 as a single, 56-page document unifying five different codes put into effect in various regions of the U.S. earlier in the decade. (The first electrical code was developed specifically to minimize fire hazards in textile mill installations.) But, few contractors were satisfied with this set of regulations that they had no voice in developing. Many felt that the code reflected merely the desire of insurance companies to reduce losses for damaged property, rather than stressing practical installation methods that would ensure workers’ safety. At the same time, many electrical contractors saw the need to establish state laws on licensing the trade. By 1900, Minnesota was the only state to have enacted such regulations, and local electrical contractors associations were beginning to look to it as a model that should be replicated. They perceived that requiring everyone in the business to meet basic standards of competency would benefit the industry’s reputation and protect the public.
- 3.** The lack of standards for competency aggravated another problem that threatened to grow as the industry attracted an ever-expanding number of businesses. Not all of these entrepreneurs were honest or skilled. If it reached public attention, the poor performance of just one electrical contractor could tarnish the image of all his counterparts and prejudice potential customers against “electrifying.” Then, too, in the face of increasingly stiff competition, many contractors suffered from the less-than-ethical practices of some of their rivals. Many early industry leaders saw the need to develop a basic code of business ethics, in addition to uniform codes and standards for performing installations.

4. But how could novice electrical contractors, who were more likely to have been “educated” – if educated at all – in the mechanics of the job than in commercial management, be persuaded to operate according to ethical directives? To accomplish this objective, a system of providing management training would have to be developed. Some local associations were already addressing this concern, but they realized that the industry would not flourish unless all its members across the nation adopted a professional approach. Industry expansion was also hampered by a lack of skilled craftsmen to do the work.
5. Not the least of the contractors’ concerns revolved around how to deal with labor relations in general and the organized labor movement in particular. At the turn of the century, the nation was still recovering from the severe economic depression of the 1890s. Many contractors retained memories of those days when anti-union feeling ran high (due, in part, to the prevalent misconception that the country’s financial turmoil stemmed from union forces inflating the wage base) and often erupted into violent confrontations. Some electrical contractors would carry their prejudices well into the twentieth century, postponing until after World War I the establishment of the relationship of mutual respect and cooperation that unionized electrical contractors and their workforce enjoy today.

It would take some time for the fledgling electrical construction industry to address all these concerns, but movement in this direction began before the 20th century commenced. By 1899, an organization representing six associations of electrical contractors within the state of New York was formed: the United Electrical Contractors of New York State.

In early 1901, the New York group was preparing for its convention at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. This was to be a historic occasion. Thomas Edison himself was to be on hand to officiate at an “illumination” ceremony to launch the “electrification” of the fair, where exposition-goers were to be dazzled, for the first time ever, by the light of more than 10,000 bulbs providing instant illumination at the flick of a switch.

The United Electrical Contractors of New York State decided to make the event even more historic. They sent out a call for representatives of all the electrical contracting associations across the nation to join their convention to explore the possibility of establishing a national organization. The call was answered by 49 contractors from 18 cities in eight states (New York, Maryland, Missouri, Minnesota, Michigan, Massachusetts, Ohio and Pennsylvania). The prime motivation that prompted the 49 contractors to come together was the installation of electrical equipment by a wide variety of businessmen lacking any common code of ethics or protocol. The men who met in Buffalo wanted to create an industry. They were struggling, in effect, to establish an identity for their trade.

Shortly after 2:00 p.m. on July 17, 1901, this group meeting in the New York State Building on the exposition grounds had ratified into being the National Electrical Contractors Association of the United States. At that initial meeting the allied contractors elected officers, with Charles L. Eidlitz of New York City chosen as the association’s first national president, and settled on Utica, NY, as home to the association’s first national headquarters. A constitution and bylaws also were adopted. As set forth in that first constitution, “The objects for which this Association is formed are the fostering of trade among electrical contractors ... to reform abuses ... to settle differences between its members ... and to promote more enlarged and friendly discourse among its membership.”

Carrying out those objectives would continue to occupy the association for the next century – and well beyond!



**T**HE NATIONAL ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION represents, promotes, and advances the interests of the technical contracting industry. Our efforts benefit all branches of the industry – including skilled electricians, linemen, installers and technicians – as well as the customers it serves; but our association’s chief purpose is to help enhance the position of its member companies, which are firms engaged primarily in power distribution and/or integrated systems (voice-data-video) work.

## NECA’s Vision

NECA: A dynamic national organization serving the management interests of the entire technical contracting industry.

and deliver the best possible services to customers. Our slate of member services is constantly evolving and expanding, so what you’ll find in these pages is some basic information on what NECA does to help members grow and prosper. You may obtain additional information from your local NECA chapter office. And, you can always find up-to-date information on our website at <http://www.necanet.org>.

### HOW CAN ELECTRICAL CONTRACTORS AVAIL THEMSELVES OF NECA SERVICES?

Electrical contractors affiliate with NECA’s national organization and gain access to its member services and programs through membership in their local NECA chapter. As long as an electrical contracting company is a member in good standing in a NECA chapter, that company is also a member of NECA’s national organization. There is a NECA chapter representing each major trading area in the nation, and each chapter serves as the multi-employer bargaining agent with its corresponding local union(s) of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW).

NECA chapters operate autonomously, elect their own officers, set their own dues and service charges, and determine their own priorities. Each chapter operates its own local programs and may provide services for its own members that are in addition to the national programs mentioned in this booklet.

Each NECA chapter has a professional staff member whose duty is to manage the chapter’s affairs and programs on behalf of the local membership. NECA’s national organization conducts a broadbased program for training competent professionals to assume chapter management positions, but each chapter selects its own manager and office staff. What the individual NECA chapter accomplishes for its members depends upon the staff those members select to conduct the chapter’s business and upon the members’ support and active participation in chapter programs.

### HOW IS NECA’S NATIONAL ORGANIZATION SET UP TO DELIVER SERVICES TO MEMBERS?

Each NECA-member contractor has an opportunity to participate in developing the national association’s

## NECA’s Envisioned Future

**LEADERSHIP:** NECA will be the known agent of industry growth, change, and professionalism.

**KNOWLEDGE SOURCE:** NECA will be valued globally as the source of cutting-edge industry research, knowledge, and information.

**ADVOCACY:** NECA will be universally known as the voice and advocate for the industry.

**MARKET EXPANSION:** NECA members will perform the vast majority of the nation’s power and information systems work and will be the technical contractors of choice for installing and managing all building systems.

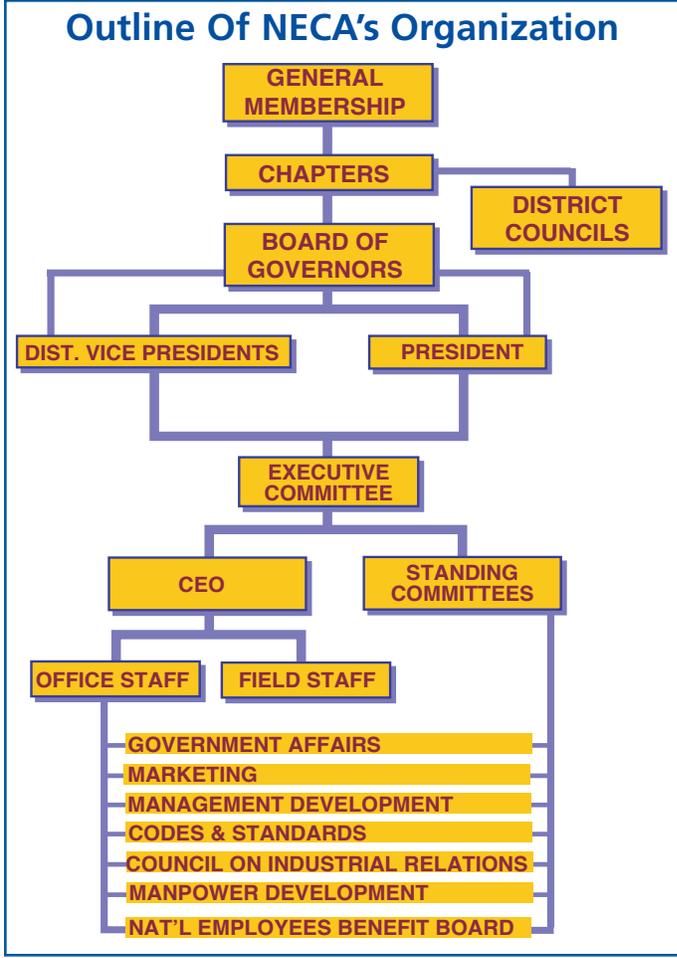
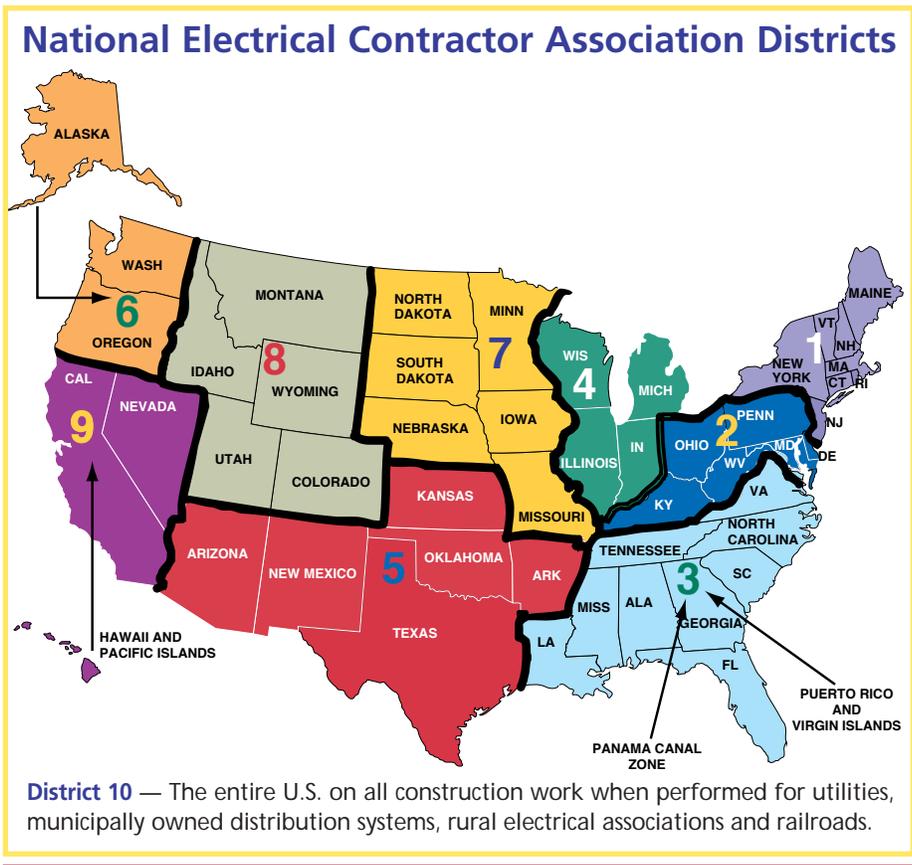
**WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT:** NECA and its members, in partnership with their labor allies, will produce an abundant supply of skilled, productive, and safe craftworkers.

**MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT:** NECA will be the acknowledged source of management training and education within the industry.

policies, electing leadership, evaluating current member services and recommending new services to meet changing needs, and guiding NECA's involvement in a wide range of activities. All the members help decide the national association's course because each chapter elects a "governor" from among its members to represent the chapter to NECA's national organization. The assembly of the governors of all chapters is known as the "NECA Board of Governors" and is NECA's policy-making body. The board meets every year prior to NECA's national convention to decide issues important to the entire organization. Each governor casts a vote weighted in accordance with the number of chapter members in good standing whom he or she represents.

To further ensure fair representation, the chapters are divided into 10 districts. Nine of these districts are grouped on the basis of geographical location. The tenth is comprised of the NECA line-construction chapters from all across the nation which represent contractors engaged in a special type of electrical construction with its own special set of concerns. Each district elects a vice president to preside as chairman of his or her district council, in which governing and managing representatives of all the NECA chapters within the district meet at least twice per year to ensure the proper promotion of the association's policies and programs. The district vice presidents also serve on NECA's executive committee. (The executive committee is chaired by NECA's president, a member contractor elected through the Board of Governors.)

In addition, the national association's president designates district vice presidents to chair or act as liaison officers between the executive committee and NECA's "standing" (or permanent) committees. As shown in the "Outline of NECA's Organization" on this page, standing committees – each of which includes a secretary from the management staff at NECA's national headquarters office – have been set up in accordance with the association's Bylaws to guide and promote NECA's participation in government affairs; marketing; management development; codes and standards; the Council on Industrial Relations (an arbitration body which, as discussed on page 6, is operated jointly with the IBEW); manpower development, and the National Employees Benefit Board. (Special non-permanent committees and task forces may also be convened by NECA's president.)



A unique structure ensures that services are made available to all contractor members. Direct responsibility for bringing NECA programs to the contractor rests with the NECA Field Service, comprised of four centrally located regional offices – in the eastern, southern, mid-western, and western areas of the United States – each with an executive regional director in charge.

Each regional office maintains a full staff of trained field representatives to assist members and chapter staff in a wide variety of services and programs, ranging from labor relations to management consultation (as mentioned in the adjacent box). These specialists also help deliver nationally developed programs, such as management education courses, at the chapter level.

Staff at NECA's national office also work closely with chapter staff to make nationally developed services

### Help Is Only A Call, Fax Or E-mail Away

The NECA member's first resort for help and information is his or her local chapter office. The staff at national headquarters in Bethesda, MD, also stands ready to answer members' inquiries. And, when *special* assistance is needed, the NECA-member contractor has another resort. Through its Management Education Institute, which works in partnership with the organization's regional and chapter structure, NECA makes available a specialized consultation service. (See the box on page 11 for details.)

accessible through the chapter structure. In other words, all divisions in the organization cooperate to help members avail themselves of NECA's vast array of services.

## Efforts To Ensure Best Possible Chapter Management Serve Members' Interests

NECA's national staff and regional directors assist in training new chapter staff executives and in keeping all chapter managers abreast of developments within the industry. The NECA Association Executive Institute is conducted yearly to afford chapter staff executives an opportunity to review service techniques and resolve potential problems. The regional and national chapter executives' meetings and other special educational programs made available through the national organization all strive to better qualify and instruct chapter managers as professional association executives with specific emphasis on meeting the needs of the NECA-member electrical contractor.

### WHAT SERVICES DOES NECA PROVIDE TO ASSIST CONTRACTORS WITH LABOR RELATIONS?

Trust and cooperation are essential ingredients in an effective, profitable working relationship between employer and employee. NECA's national association, its chapters, and members have long practiced constructive and responsible labor relations in concert with the IBEW, the world's oldest and largest union of electrical workers. NECA makes every effort to ensure that all parties concerned – all levels of the association, its members, their supervisory personnel, and the international and local unions – provide the maximum possible productivity per manhour of labor in order to compete profitably and promote consumer use of the services of skilled electrical craftsmen employed by qualified contractors.

**Peaceful approaches to the settlement of grievances** and the avoidance of strikes, work stoppages and jurisdictional disputes are implemented at both the national and local levels. The Labor Relations Office at NECA's national headquarters works closely with the international organization of the IBEW to develop mutually acceptable national labor agreements and also serves a vital role in providing NECA chapters with advice and information on matters that affect labor relations.

As discussed on page 6, NECA has, along with the IBEW, sponsored the *Council on Industrial Relations* ever since 1920 in order to arbitrate disputes to the mutu-

al satisfaction of labor and management. In addition, in 1995, NECA and the IBEW together established the *National Labor-Management Cooperation Committee* to help put national joint initiatives in effect at the regional and local level and to coordinate a wide range of activities with the goals of further improving the NECA-IBEW relationship and benefitting members of both organizations. (The NLMCC is discussed on page 10.)

On the local level, NECA chapters, which act as multi-employer bargaining agents with their corresponding unions, cooperate with local IBEW business managers to develop local labor contracts that enhance labor-management rapport. The field representatives that are associated with NECA's regional offices help expedite the process in their role as labor negotiators/mediators.

**Ensuring fair wages and benefits** for skilled electrical workers serves the best interests of the industry. NECA chapters work with their corresponding IBEW locals to see that employees have access to superior health and welfare-type benefits under the provisions of their collectively bargained labor agreements. Beyond these benefits, IBEW members and other workers employed by NECA contractors can rely on one of the best and biggest union pension plans in North America. This plan helps attract highly qualified workers to our industry.

The National Electrical Benefit Fund (NEBF) was jointly established by the IBEW and NECA in 1946 to

provide the best possible pension benefits for electrical workers. From a 1947 bank account balance of just under \$21,000, the fund's assets available for benefits have grown to several *billion* dollars – more than adequate to provide for current beneficiaries and for investments to fund future benefit pay-outs.

The NEBF invests in a diversified portfolio and has assets in indexed stock equities and bonds, real estate, guaranteed insurance contracts, mortgages, and venture capital. Investments are professionally administered, with oversight provided by the National Employees Benefit Board, comprised of representatives from both NECA and the IBEW. This board also reviews the plan's assets and liabilities on a regular basis and authorizes benefit increases whenever increases are financially feasible.

To meet the skilled workforce needs of the electrical contracting industry, NECA and the IBEW sponsor comprehensive apprenticeship and training programs for future electrical workers, as well as continuing education and training programs for journey-level electricians, linemen, and telecommunication technicians/in-

stallers. These programs are provided through more than 300 training centers across the country.

These training centers are jointly operated by NECA chapters and their corresponding IBEW local unions. Apprenticeship recruitment efforts are waged on a national, regional, and local level, but it is at the local level where decisions are made regarding the selection of applicants for apprenticeship (who are usually “indentured” to receive the on-the-job portion of their training through employment with local IBEW-signatory electrical contractors), and the content of the programs may vary to some extent from area to area.

However, the curricula is, for the most part, developed through the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee. As the training arm of the organized electrical construction industry, the NJATC is funded by the IBEW and NECA, without any reliance on taxpayer support. The NJATC courses are developed in conjunction with industry experts. Also, training partners from the electrical manufacturing community often assist in preparing the course material, serving as in-

## CIR: “A Monument To Constructive Labor-Management Relations”

Assistance with labor relations is certainly *NOT* the only service NECA offers members, but it is one of the most revered. The relationship enjoyed between NECA and the IBEW developed over many decades.

When NECA was founded at the turn of the century, the nation was still recuperating from the severe economic depression of the 1890s. Many contractors retained memories of those days when anti-union feeling ran high. Still, for every contractor that swore at the union, others could be found who would swear by it. Letters between local contractors associations in those early days indicated that many employers, motivated by a desire to keep qualified electricians from being enticed away to other areas, were interested in establishing local or regional labor agreements. Some were even calling for the development of a national labor agreement “for the mutual benefit of both groups.”

As early as 1916, a small group of NECA contractors, calling themselves the “Conference Club,” was meeting regularly to discuss matters pertinent to electrical construction. A most active member of this group, L.K. Comstock, proposed that the club get together with a committee from the IBEW in order to draft a national labor agreement. Spurred on by Charles Ford – who was then the International Secretary of the Brotherhood – the union hierarchy agreed.

Their efforts resulted in the joint “Declaration of Principles,” ratified in 1919. This historic agreement

between NECA and the IBEW embraced the concept that the interests of the public, the employer and the employee are inseparably bound together and that all benefit from a peaceful and harmonious relationship. (Even today, similar language appears in every local labor agreement adopted by NECA and the IBEW.)

A joint committee of five NECA contractors and five labor representatives used the Declaration as a foundation for development of the *Council on Industrial Relations*. Ever since April 1920, the Council has met quarterly to hear cases and render decisions on areas of disagreement between management and labor in the electrical construction industry.

Decisions are reached by a unanimous vote of all six representatives of NECA and all six representatives from the IBEW that sit on the Council's dispute-resolution panels. Although use of the CIR is entirely voluntary and either member organization may withdraw from participation upon three month's written notice, it continues to endure.

A monument to constructive labor-management relations, the Council is but one example of the good that has resulted through the relationship of trust and respect built up over the years between NECA and the IBEW. It has also served as an example to other trades and industries that have widely emulated this approach to labor-management dispute resolution. It has won praise from the federal government and private business.

structors, or providing demonstration equipment for hands-on learning in JATC classrooms. The apprenticeship programs for electricians, linemen, and technicians are all multi-year, involve extensive on-the-job training as well as classroom instruction, and are registered with the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) – meaning they that are certified as meeting or surpassing the BAT's rigorous standards.

Each year, more than 42,000 apprentices undergo IBEW-NECA training. And, each year, more than 50,000 journeymen return to the classroom to upgrade their skills through courses on telecommunications, fiber optics, programmable logic controls, safety, the *National Electrical Code*, and much more. These numbers make our NJATC the world's largest construction training organization!

**The NJATC is a permanent, on-demand resource** for NECA contractors and their employees. Most of its programs can be brought to local IBEW-NECA collective bargaining areas where demand warrants; moreover, NECA-member contractors can arrange to send personnel to the NJATC's *International Training Center* in Knoxville, TN, for specialized training as the need arises.

The Training Center, which was established in cooperation with the University of Tennessee, is open year-round to provide as-needed training for contractors and their employees and for the preparation of an outstanding corps of instructors to deliver NJATC-developed training programs around the country. It is also the home of

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## **Commitment To Superior Workforce Training Present From The Beginning**

The union founded as the “National Brotherhood of Electrical Workers,” which later became “international” with the induction of a Canadian affiliate, adopted a constitution at its very first convention in 1891. It established an apprentice training system requiring the apprentice to work for three years under a journeyman's supervision before being admitted to membership. The training program was expanded considerably over the years with the addition of structured course work and requirements to pass written examinations.



When NECA and the IBEW began to work together in earnest, the program gained greater effectiveness. In 1941, following passage of the Federal Apprenticeship Training Act, joint cooperation produced the National Apprenticeship Standards for the Electrical Construction Industry. By 1952,

the organizations agreed to appoint a full-time director to administer the system that would evolve into the National Joint Apprenticeship and Training Committee.

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the NJATC's *National Training Institute*, an annual event held each summer which offers a trade show combined with cutting-edge technical training programs for contractors and their key personnel.

**Employees are the focus** of other NECA training programs, as well. These include courses offered through our Management Education Institute (*discussed on pages 11-12*) in such subjects as “Electrical Project Supervision” and all types of electrical estimating. The association also makes available a wide variety of materials that contractors may use in employee training programs.

In addition, NECA's outreach with universities and colleges helps prepare a cadre of skilled professionals to assume careers in our industry. Not only have such efforts resulted in the establishment of a number of “NECA Student Chapters,” but also they are facilitating the development of curricula at institutions of higher learning where students can major in construction management with a focus on electrical contracting.

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## **HOW DOES NECA HELP ITS MEMBERS IMPROVE THEIR MANAGEMENT CAPABILITIES?**

By keeping them in the know and helping them know more! That is, NECA provides INFORMATION to help its members to make informed business decisions and EDUCATION to help them tackle business demands.

### ***First, a look at NECA's information services ...***

Serving as the voice of electrical construction, NECA works continually to ensure that its members are kept informed of developments both within the organization and within the electrical contracting industry as a whole. The association is also committed to reconfirming on a continual basis that NECA is THE source of cutting-edge industry research, knowledge, and information. NECA administers a multi-pronged communications effort.

**1 NECA maintains a strong presence on the Internet.** In fact, there's a whole family of publicly accessible websites that are well promoted and registered with many popular search engines. Our association's main website, located at <http://www.necanet.org>, serves as a portal to all of NECA's other sites, including the NECA Connection “Find A Contractor” service (discussed on page 16). Sites within this family include, but are not limited to, the following:

- *Electrical Contractor* magazine (see page 8)  
<http://www.ecmag.com>
- The Electrical Contracting Foundation (see page 9)  
<http://www.electri21.org>
- The Management Education Institute (page 11)  
<http://www.NECA-MEI.org>
- The NECA Show (page 12)  
<http://www.necashow.org>

- The NECA Voice-Data-Video Expo (page 12)  
<http://www.VDVExpo.com>
- National Electrical Installation Standards™ (page 14)  
<http://www.NECA-NEIS.org>

While NECA's publicly accessible websites carry association and industry news to acquaint visitors with our mission and activities (and thus serve, in part, as public relations vehicles), they also present a wealth of information and interactive services that are helpful to NECA-member contractors. Additionally, the association also maintains a **private website exclusive to members and staff** (<http://www.necanet.org/private>). The first thing that pops up on this private site is regularly updated industry and association news, much of which is not available from any other source at NECA. This site also contains other timely information, archives of important association documents, and links to numerous member services.

② **NECA publishes *Electrical Contractor* magazine.** Via this publication, more than 85,000 key electrical industry personnel are kept informed every month on what the electrical contracting industry – and NECA – are thinking and doing. It's distributed to every employing electrical contractor in the U.S. and to many in foreign lands, not just to NECA members. It also goes, upon request, to IBEW officials and business managers, key supervisory personnel of electrical contracting companies, and fourth-year apprentices.

*Electrical Contractor* focuses on power applications and integrated building systems. A major topic of current interest to electrical contractors is featured each month with several articles that impart the findings of *Electrical Contractor* research, provide "how-to" guidance, and showcase the latest related products and services. Regular columns provide insights on industry developments, handling tax obligations, complying with contract law, meeting electrical code requirements, and performing specialized installations.

It addresses both management and technical concerns. The association is promoted through a monthly roundup of "NECA News" as well as a regular message "From the President's Desk." The magazine also features an annual economic forecast and a once-per-year look at the most helpful new types of tools and equipment. In addition, *Electrical Contractor* regularly publishes special up-to-the-minute reports, such as *Guide to the Electrical Contracting Market* and the *Profile of the Electrical Contractor*.

Except for a ten-year period from 1928 through 1938, when the magazine was published by a private company, NECA has put out a periodical every month since November 1901. Today, *Electrical Contractor* is structured as a self-supporting operation within the association and derives its support from the advertising space sold to electrical manufacturers and suppliers.

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To learn more about *Electrical Contractor* magazine, visit <http://www.ecmag.com>. This site presents news, some of the most popular features from the magazine, a "resource center" with information on special-interest topics, and indexes of past issues. It also enables visitors to subscribe to a number of free e-mail newsletter services.

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③ **NECA News provides ongoing member contact.** This newsletter has been published continually ever since 1939 for the exclusive benefit of the NECA contractor.

Published every other week, *NECA News* reports on all developments of interest to a broad cross-section of the membership. In addition to providing information on NECA's activities, such as member-advocacy efforts in industry and government affairs, and introducing new products and services, the newsletter also covers pending legislation that could impact the electrical contracting industry, technical areas where members can take advantage of emerging markets, and relevant issues within the business community. The newsletter aims to impart recommendations that members can apply in order to improve their productivity and profits. *NECA News* is also the association's foremost vehicle for recognizing the achievements of outstanding members and innovative efforts undertaken at the chapter level.

④ **NECA also publishes several specialized newsletters** on a regular basis in order to address special-interest topics – such as utility deregulation and energy management or codes and standards – in detail. These newsletters are mailed to members at no charge as they are published, usually on a quarterly or bimonthly basis, and they are also archived on the private, members-only website. (In a similar fashion, NECA's members-only site features special interest sections on such topics as government affairs, labor relations, safety and insurance, marketing, and voice-data-video and systems technology.)

⑤ **NECA produces a vast array of management reports, as well as technical guides**, all of which are available to members and many of which are offered for sale to the public. They are all the products of intensive research, often conducted by industry experts and scholars in consultation with staff specialists and utilizing real-life data derived from electrical contractors.

For example, NECA's research efforts have made the indispensable *Manual of Labor Units* and other labor cost studies available for nearly a century. The Manual, which provides reliable labor units for aid in estimating, is updated on a regular basis to keep current with changes in procedures, technology and construction economics. Similarly, regular member surveys help the national organization compile the electrical construction industry's most comprehensive set of financial statistics, the biennially updated *Financial Performance Report*, which enables con-

## Electrical Contracting Foundation's Efforts Shine Guiding Light

**N**ECA's Board of Governors voted in 1988 to approve the establishment of an independent research organization as a private, non-profit foundation. Its purpose would be to help meet NECA's commitment to serve as the guiding force in preparing the electrical contracting industry for the challenges of the 21st century.

Since then, Foundation research has resulted in dozens of products concentrating on the following areas of interest:

- **Career Awareness** (to make individuals aware of the career opportunities in the electrical and high-tech information systems industry);
- **Productivity Enhancement** (to empower trade-oriented managers to function optimally in a sophisticated and rapidly changing business environment);
- **Organizational Development** (to help electrical contractors recognize and practice the most efficient means of directing the whole business organization);
- **New Business Sector** (to provide electrical contractors with reliable market information, research and education on new directions and opportunities); and
- **Technology Transfer** (to help contractors develop the skills to recognize and apply new methods of installation and product application and to encourage more efficient technology transfer from producer to user).

The Electrical Contracting Foundation solicits research project proposals in these areas of interest from industry experts and scholars. Proposals are evaluated by the Foundation's Center for Research Excellence, and those deemed most pertinent to advancing the success of the industry and its participants are selected for development. The Foundation then publishes and disseminates the research findings to the entire electrical contracting industry and its allied partners.

Education is also an integral part of the Foundation's objective to serve the industry. To this end, Al and Margaret

Wendt (of NECA-member firm Cannon & Wendt Electric in Phoenix, Arizona) provided a substantial grant to establish the Center for Academic Excellence within the Foundation to upgrade management and supervisory education for every electrical contractor. It oversees educational programs commissioned by the Foundation and conducted by a single institution or by a consortium of key universities. The Center also houses The McBride Legacy Initiative (created by Richard and Darlene McBride of NECA-member firm Southern Contracting in San Diego, California) which provides company-transition education. In addition, many Foundation projects have formed the basis for programs offered through NECA's Management Education Institute (discussed on the next page).

The ELECTRI'21 Council, made up of major contributors, has assisted the Foundation in amassing a permanent – and growing – multi-million-dollar endowment to fund this important work. Contributors are contractors, NECA chapters, manufacturers, distributors, utilities, and other industry participants. ELECTRI'21 (which is, in fact, synonymous with the Foundation) also directs the Center for Research Excellence and the Center for Academic Excellence. In short, ELECTRI'21 works in partnership with NECA and every electrical contractor to fund, conduct, coordinate, and monitor the industry's most critical research and to commission and deliver the highest quality management education and supervisory training programs.



To learn more about the Electrical Contracting Foundation, including research projects completed and those in progress, visit <http://www.electri21.org>.

tractors to analyze their operations in comparison with counterparts and is also helpful in securing financing.

In addition, NECA produces an array of information resources – available in multiple media – addressing various aspects of business and project management, labor relations, codes and standards, safety, marketing, government affairs and regulation, and technical issues. These products, as well as related services, are cataloged in *The NECA Book*, a regularly updated all-in-one NECA reference which is provided at no charge to members. Most can also be ordered through “The NECA Store” in the “Publications” section of the association’s primary website at <http://www.necanet.org>.

In addition, a complimentary copy of each research report developed through the Electrical Contracting Foundation (discussed in the box on this page) is provided to each NECA member. Each member contractor also receives a complimentary copy of each publication developed in the *National Electrical Installation Standards™* series (discussed on page 14).

⑥ **NECA chapters receive advanced notice** of new products and services, as well as guidance on effecting the best possible chapter management, with the *NECA Chapter ALERT*. The *ALERT* is published as needed to impart information of particular concern to the chapter offices, the field service, and NECA’s leadership.

# Joint NECA-IBEW Initiatives Facilitated Through National LMCC

In the 1980s, NECA and the IBEW launched a customer relations campaign themed “*The Quality Connection*” to promote the “on-time, on-budget, right-the-first-time” services available from NECA contractors and their IBEW workers. It was revitalized with the establishment of the “*IBEW-NECA Blueprint for the 1990s*,” a multi-faceted initiative designed “to improve communication, cooperation and productivity with the goal of increasing market share for NECA contractors and IBEW workers.”

Both initiatives made positive impacts. They got some NECA chapters and IBEW locals which had previously had minimal contact to pull together in efforts to increase market share. They also inspired the creation of such programs as the *NECA-IBEW Mutual Gains Bargaining Workshop*, which addresses an innovative system of negotiation and was designed for our industry by the faculty of Cornell University’s School of Industrial and Labor Relations.



To hasten our achievement of the joint vision embodied in the *Quality Connection* and *Blueprint*, our *National Labor-Management Cooperation Committee* was established in 1995 following months of intense deliberations between the leadership of NECA and the IBEW. Its implementation at the local level was phased in through the normal collective bargaining process.

By then, many NECA chapters had already set up local Labor-Management Cooperation Committees in concert with their corresponding IBEW local unions in order to explore ways to work together more productively and implement programs to increase work opportunities. The primary function of our National LMCC is to serve as a national facilitator for joint industry efforts. Obviously, operating on a national basis increases the funding and administrative capabilities needed to put these efforts into effect. The National LMCC not only allows for the pooling of resources; in many regards, it also saves each local area from the need to reinvent the wheel.

For example, the National LMCC can assist local areas in conducting marketing surveys, pursuing aggressive sales promotion campaigns, and improving the quality of labor and management education. In addition, local areas that have been unable on their own to resolve long-term labor disputes can turn to the National LMCC to help investigate the underlying causes, mediate conflicts, and ensure that the means of resolution are carried out.

Of course, as a national facilitator, the NLMCC is also involved in many highly visible activities for the benefit

of the entire organized electrical contracting industry. Among these is an award-winning national advertising campaign promoting the superiority of our joint training programs and the high caliber of services available from NECA contractors and their IBEW employees. The National LMCC funds the creation of high-impact print ads and has them placed in leading trade publications where they are seen by thousands of construction and voice-data-video industry decision-makers every month.

The ads are also made available in a wide variety of formats, for use by local NECA-IBEW groups. Similarly, our NLMCC has produced a number of TV spots and videos (including several which focus on workforce recruitment) that are offered for use on a local or regional basis.

Another highly visible NLMCC product is *The Quality Connection*. The purpose of this little magazine, which debuted in the fall of 1996, is to improve communication between contractors and workers, provide information on joint activities, and accentuate the positive aspects of NECA and IBEW cooperation. Every other month, well over 230,000 copies go out to all IBEW Construction Branch members, all IBEW-signatory contractors, NECA and IBEW staff, chapter offices, and others who request it.

Another BIG project undertaken by our National LMCC is the *IBEW-NECA Partners for the 21st Century* program. Strong, committed partners can improve customer satisfaction by working together on marketing and image enhancement, improved training, and overcoming the negatives — such as labor-management disputes — that can turn customers off. Therefore, the partnering program starts with a step-by-step process of identifying local concerns. The local partners develop and sign off on a formal Partnering Charter and work together on developing and carrying out action plans to reach their agreed-upon goals. The National LMCC pays for the initial session and first follow-up session conducted in each IBEW-NECA collective bargaining area.

The activities of the National LMCC are certainly not limited to the few mentioned here. The committee is also active in sponsoring research and conducting advocacy, education, and compliance programs involving such issues as skilled workforce shortages, prevailing-wage laws, utility deregulation, Workers’ Compensation, unemployment insurance, code enforcement, and occupational safety and health. In deciding what efforts to pursue, mutual benefit is the paramount consideration. The NLMCC is for the good of labor and management. What’s good for both the IBEW and NECA is good for the future of our industry!

To learn more, check out the NLMCC’s site on the Internet at <http://www.thequalityconnection.org>.

*And, now, a look at NECA's educational services ...*



As related on pages 6-7, NECA has been meeting its commitment

to help provide superior workforce training almost from the association's very beginning. NECA has also been the leader in providing educational programs to meet the management aims of electrical contractors for decades.

In 1948, the association launched the first formal management education program for electrical contractors and their key employees, offering courses in estimating, job management, marketing, accounting, and "self-appraisal." In the early 1950s, NECA established a management education department to develop and deliver such programs as "Effective Foremanship," "Basic Estimating," and "Executive Finance."

Over the ensuing years, NECA educational offerings became increasingly varied and complex in order to meet the changing needs of electrical contractors. Programs addressing all types of estimating, project and job management, supervision, and a host of other concerns were delivered at the NECA-chapter level, with capable members of the field staff and other industry experts and scholars serving as instructors. Additional multi-day seminars were presented to focus in-depth attention on topics of special interest and to help young people in NECA-member firms grow into management roles. NECA also produced (and continues to develop) a wide variety of management reports and materials that contractors could use for self-study or in-house training.

Then, in 1998, the association established a new way to improve the delivery of seminars and workshops and facilitate the development of new programs. Now, NECA's **Management Education Institute** develops, schedules, and promotes seminars in dozens of convenient locations all across the country every year.

The MEI curriculum is focused on the business, technical, and project management disciplines which are essential to success in the electrical contracting industry. This curriculum comprises a hierarchy of knowledge that addresses the needs of electrical contracting managers beginning with their early roles as supervisors and continuing through their tenure as decision-making executives with corporate responsibilities.

As this publication was being written, MEI was offering more than 40 different programs, to a total audience of well over 600, every month. A few of the programs which were being delivered at this time include:

- Advanced Construction Law For Electrical Contractors
- Conflict Resolution
- Financial Principles & Tools for the Electrical Contractor
- Negotiations - Communicating for Win-Win Relationships
- Successful Entry Into the Voice/Data/Video Market
- Succession Planning
- VDV Business & Customer Development
- Design Build Methods for Electrical Project Delivery
- Electrical Project Supervision (Level I, II, and III)
- Elements Of Electrical Contracting
- Fundamentals of Construction Law for Electrical Project Managers
- Project Management for Electrical Contractor's
- Safety for Electrical Project Supervisors
- Basic and Advanced Estimating
- Line Construction Foremanship
- Change Orders in Electrical Construction
- Estimating Basic Structured Cabling Systems
- Introduction to Structured Cabling Systems
- Principles and Practices of Project Scheduling

The curriculum is under constant review. Courses are kept up-to-date, and new programs are continually under development. In fact, the Institute brings a wide

## Consulting And In-House Instruction Services Available To Member Firms

**M**anagement Education Institute staff instructors, who are full time employees of NECA, are available to provide consulting services to NECA-member firms in their respective areas of teaching expertise and as their schedules permit. Upon request, courses taught by MEI contract instructors and academic faculty may also be arranged for in-house presentation within NECA-member companies where the subject matter would be of use to a large number of employees.

Among the topics on which MEI staff may serve as consultants are financial performance and valuation, succession planning, conflict resolution, negotiation, basic and advanced estimating, applications of the *NECA Manual of Labor Units*, business planning, sales, and customer development. For a catalog of MEI courses, visit <http://www.NECA-MEI.org>.

All arrangements for consulting services and in-house instruction are made through the NECA MEI office. The consulting services and in-house teaching by NECA staff instructors are offered to NECA members as a member service. No professional fee is charged, but client firms pay the actual costs associated with a consultant's travel, materials, and any instructional support required on site.

range of resources to bear in the continuing development of the educational services program, including the research capabilities of the Electrical Contracting Foundation, on-staff experience and instructional capabilities, and the teaching and research expertise of academic faculty and consultants.

And, not only does MEI work in partnership with the NECA regional and chapter structure to deliver its

courses where they are accessible to NECA member firms and their management employees. The Institute also plays an instrumental role in the development and presentation of educational offerings at NECA's annual National Convention (discussed below) and other association events.

To find out more about NECA's Management Education Institute, go to <http://www.NECA-MEI.org>.

## Education And Information: Common Focus Of NECA's National Convention, The NECA Show, And VDV Conferences & Expo

Our association came into being during a convention, of sorts, in 1901, and NECA has put on a convention each year after that, except during the darkest days of the Great Depression in 1933 and 1934. The NECA Show – North America's leading power distribution and cabling exposition – has been presented every year since 1954. In 2000, another annual program was added to our industry's calendar – The VDV (Voice-Data-Video)/Integrated Building Systems Conference & Expo.

Several thousand members, guests and suppliers from all parts of the nation and many foreign countries annually convene for NECA's Convention and Show. These events, held immediately following the annual Board of Governors Meeting and hosted in a different city each year, furnish participants unparalleled professional development opportunities, an occasion to renew old acquaintances and meet new friends, and all the fun and excitement inherent in a major association's major "happening."

They come to the convention to hear outstanding industry leaders, business authorities, scholars, and government figures discuss issues bearing on the work of the electrical contractor. Participants also attend workshops addressing such important subjects as labor relations, manpower development, marketing, financial management, estimating, and government and industry affairs, as well as technical issues. The social functions and lively entertainment sponsored by the association and by suppliers all add a festive note to the proceedings.

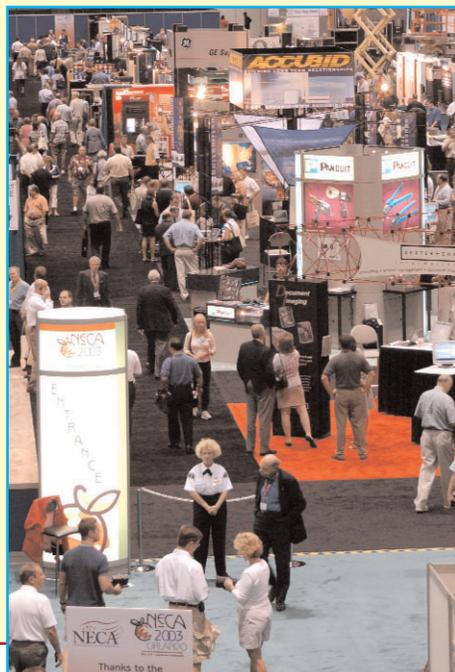
Held in conjunction with the convention, The NECA Show has become the premiere showcase for electri-

cal manufacturers, distributors, and other suppliers serving the electrical contracting industry. Each year, more than 200 large and small firms exhibit a wide variety of products and services used in all types of electrical construction, low voltage and integrated systems work, maintenance, estimating, recordkeeping, and office and warehouse operations. Several exhibitors also host technical seminars to introduce new products and techniques enabling contractors to work "smarter" and more profitably.

The VDV/IBS Conference & Expo is similar to the NECA Show in that it provides space for major manufacturers and other suppliers to display their latest and most useful products and services, and it also offers both management and technical training. The difference is that the program focuses exclusively on voice-data-video applications, integrated systems work, and related telecommunications, safety, and security issues.

Most portions of the week-long VDV program are open to all participants in the building/grounds (or premises) cabling market. However, some segments are held exclusively for NECA and IBEW representatives, thus providing them with a forum for discussing their organizations' mutual plans and objectives in this specialized marketplace. In fact, the program's permanent placement on the association's calendar recognizes the maturing of the VDV market and the expanding opportunities this market represents.

Ideas, innovations, and information – enlivened by the excitement of discovery of the new and different – are the rewards in store for those who participate in the NECA Convention, the NECA Show, and the VDV Conferences & Expo. For more information on the annual Convention and The NECA Show, check out <http://www.necashow.org>. To learn more about the VDV program, go to <http://www.vdvexpo.org>.



## HOW DOES NECA HELP ITS MEMBERS PROTECT THEIR EMPLOYEES AND MANAGE RISK?

An electrical contracting company's most valuable assets are its productive employees. NECA helps keep them safe from the very start of their careers through our co-sponsorship of workforce training (see pages 6-7) that stresses safety procedures and effective installation techniques which protect the worker as well as the customer. *But NECA's efforts in this area don't end there!*

Our association maintains an active Safety & Insurance Office. Its duties include producing resources to help members enact the most effective safe-work procedures possible, train their employees on safety, and comply with rules established by the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and similar authorities. There are many such resources currently available, and offerings are constantly reviewed, updated, and expanded.

They address safety in both electrical and voice-data-video work and come in a variety of media. There are in-depth guides, such as the *Contractor Action Plan for OSHA Inspections*, and publications covering all aspects of specific OSHA regulations (such as those dealing with aerial lifts, confined spaces, or lockout/tagout) so that contractors can provide required employee training and meet all paperwork obligations. There are resources to assist with in-house training, such as *100 Safety Training Toolbox Talks for Electrical Construction Work*. There's even a software program – the *NECA Safety Expert System* – that provides information and educational features and also enables the contractor to manage record-keeping chores more effectively. (For information, visit “The NECA Store” at <http://www.necanet.org>.)

In its role as industry watchdog and advocate, NECA also gets involved with OSHA, Congress, and the federal government on issues related to both proposed and existing regulations and legislation pertaining to workplace safety. Members are kept informed of all such issues, and of changes in safety rules.

When members have specific questions on safety or insurance, NECA can provide knowledgeable assistance. And, speaking of insurance, the business insurance coverages that NECA makes available in conjunction with the CNA Companies are the most flexible and comprehensive available – ranging from commercial property, commercial liability and workers' compensation to coverages for unique exposures that can put a contracting business at risk. In fact, because CNA offers especially attractive rates to NECA members, its coverages are included among the many *NECA-Member Value-Added Services* which offer member contractors significant savings and enhanced benefits on products and services they use every day (see the box on page 16 for details).

## HOW DOES NECA HELP MEMBERS “MEET CODE” AND PROMOTE THE QUALITY OF THEIR WORK?

NECA long ago embraced the principle that a qualified electrical contractor knows the *National Electrical Code* and applicable local codes and uses them to guide his or her work. In fact, participating in the formulation of effective codes and standards that protect public safety and promote quality was one of the first tasks tackled by our association.

As mentioned on page 1, the first *National Electrical Code*, which was published in 1897, was a slim 56-page document developed specifically to minimize fire hazards in textile mill installations. (Of 65 New England textile mills that “electrified” before the end of the nineteenth century, 23 suffered major fires within the first six months after their lighting was installed.) Like the local and regional codes that preceded it, this code was not highly effective.

In 1902, just a few months after NECA's founding, our association developed recommendations for changing these rules that contractors previously had no voice in formulating. That year, NECA also earned representation in the National Conference on Standard Electrical Rules. With this foundation laid, NECA went on to secure a place on the five-man panel overhauling the *National Electrical Code* in 1907.

When it was time for recodification again, in 1923, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), which had taken on responsibility for the code's administration and oversight, called on NECA for assistance. And, that same year, our association published the first-ever cross-indexed reference on the *National Electrical Code*, a publication which became an industry standard.

The *National Electrical Code* is now updated on a regular three-year cycle, and NECA is represented on each of the NFPA's 20 code-making panels. The members of NECA's Codes & Standards Committee who participate in this never-ending process take on such tasks as conducting extensive study of relevant Code articles; reviewing proposed changes, often numbering in the thousands; originating revisions; corresponding with a wide variety of interested parties; and participating in numerous Code meetings. (Similarly, NECA participates in the development of the *National Electrical Safety Code*, concerning outside construction, and other life and safety codes.)

NECA works hard to ensure that appropriate educational programs and reference materials are made available so members can “meet code.” Codes and standards are also addressed regularly in specialized newsletter and in *Electrical Contractor* magazine (see page 8). In addition, NECA works in coalition with other industry participants to promote effective codes and standards and appropriate licensing and inspection procedures. It's all part of our commitment to safety and quality!

# NECA Spearheads Development Of Quality Installation Standards

The *National Electrical Code* dictates the type of electrical materials and devices that must be used in order to assure the safe operation of electrical systems. Although the subjective guideline that “materials shall be installed in a neat and workmanlike manner” appears several times in the Code, how those materials are to be installed is never specified. In other words, an installation of superior quality and another that is just barely adequate can both “meet code.”



This lack of benchmarks for determining quality led NECA to obtain certification from the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as a standards-developing organization. (Unlike in other na-

tions where government agencies issue most or all of the standards that regulate safety and commerce, the great majority of standards used in this country are written by industry trade associations and technical societies. ANSI coordinates and manages the U.S. voluntary standards system by providing an approval process which guarantees that all documents approved as ANSI standards represent a broad consensus of affected interests.) With this certification in hand, NECA has been busy spearheading the development of quality standards for electrical construction and voice-data-video installations since 1997.

Organized as a series of installation manuals for electrical products and systems, the *National Electrical Installation Standards™* are primarily intended to be referenced by consulting engineers in bid documents and specifications. They address such topics as symbols for electrical construction drawings, steel conduits, fiber

optic cables, switchboards, motor control centers, generator sets, indoor commercial lighting systems, exterior lighting, and industrial lighting systems, panelboards, aluminum building wire and cable, busways, motors, wiring devices, hazardous (classified) locations, industrial heat tracing, telecommunications, and temporary power systems for construction sites.

These installation standards are not just NECA publications. They are often developed in conjunction with other expert groups, including the Illuminating Engineering Society of North America, the Aluminum Association, BICSI (the telecommunications installers association), the Electrical Generating Systems Association, the Fiber Optic Association, the National Electrical Manufacturing Association, and the Steel Tube Institute. Co-development improves their technical accuracy and promotes wider acceptance. In addition, submitting *NEIS* to the ANSI approval process enables all interested parties to have a say in their development.

Although the *NEIS* were originally proposed for voluntary use, they are being adopted for regulatory use in some areas at the behest of building code officials. Electrical inspectors are also leading the demand for *NEIS* to be referenced in bid documents and specifications because they provide more information than the *National Electrical Code* on how to deal with particular circumstances and special procedures. Electrical contractors and electrical workers appreciate *NEIS* for their educational value, but when *NEIS* are referenced by consulting engineers, these voluntary standards gain mandatory muscle and become an important resource for code officials as well.

Thousands of code officials, engineers, and others have been turned on to the value of *NEIS* by the NECA chapters that distribute them to local decision-makers. The installation manuals have also become “best sellers” in many technical bookstores. To find out why, visit the special website at <http://www.NECA-NEIS.org>.

## HOW DOES NECA ADVANCE MEMBERS' INTERESTS IN LEGISLATIVE AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS?

Though thoroughly non-partisan, NECA takes an active role in keeping its membership, the entire construction industry and the general public aware of the content and possible effects of legislation pertinent to the electrical contracting industry in general and to union-employed contractors in particular. The association also keeps the executive and legislative branches of the government informed of the views of electrical contractors. In addition, NECA continues to affirm its strong support for the American free-enterprise system and for protection of the rights of all individuals and the separate states.

NECA monitors legislative affairs in such areas as bidding procedures, energy use and conservation, federal procurement policy, employment laws, apprenticeship and workforce training, and taxation. Through the information sources discussed on pages 7-9 (including our active Internet websites, *NECA News* and *Electrical Contractor* magazine), NECA regularly reports on legislation introduced in Congress which could impact the electrical contractor. NECA alerts members to actions they can take to head off bad laws and promote enactment of more equitable ones.

In fact, through the *NECA Action Team* a system has been put in place whereby there is a representative with-

in each NECA chapter to guide his or her fellow members when action is needed. Additionally, the “Government Affairs” section on NECA’s members-only website at <http://www.necanet.org/private> not only contains up-to-date information on important issues, but also provides links to help NECA contractors communicate directly with their representatives in Congress.



NECA maintains a strong presence on Capitol Hill and often provides testimony on legislation and proposed rules that could affect the industry. In addition to its day-to-day contact with the policy-makers, NECA also works in joint action with other business and construction organizations to amplify members’ voice in government affairs.

In particular, our association works within the **Mechanical-Electrical-Sheet Metal Alliance** (also called “The Construction Alliance”) on a wide range of efforts. In addition to NECA, this alliance is comprised of the Mechanical Contractors Association of America (MCAA) and the Sheet Metal and Air Conditioning Contractors National Association (SMACNA). These three organizations, which together represent thousands of union-employing specialty contractors, have enjoyed cooperative relations for decades and formally allied in 1989 in order to more effectively promote members’ interests.

All NECA members are afforded the opportunity to participate in The Construction Alliance’s National Issues Conference, held each Spring in Washington, D.C. It enables participants to be updated on government affairs and meet face-to-face with their elected representatives.

*With respect to local legislation*, NECA supports local determination of local and state legislative needs but provides many resources to help chapters in their efforts to secure good government at all levels. The national office maintains a file of relevant model legislative drafts which it furnishes to chapters and members upon request. NECA also produces many publications that address, state-by-state, such issues as unfair utility competition, prompt pay rules, and regulations affecting contractors. In addition, our association can often help NECA chapters find professionals who can assist them in efforts before local legislative and regulatory bodies, including public utility commissions.

NECA also serves a watchdog role with respect to the rule-making activities of federal regulatory agencies, such as the many branches of the Department of Labor, including the Occupational Safety and Health Administration; the Department of Energy; and the General Services Administration. Representation is maintained on the advisory committees of federal government agen-

cies and informal business task groups formed from time to time to handle specific matters.

NECA also maintains active representation on inter-industry groups with interests in the electrical/electronic arena, construction, and/or the business-owner community. Participating with such organizations enables NECA (1) to promote and safeguard members’ interests in relation to these organizations’ work; (2) to gain information on industry and business matters which can be passed on to members; and (3) to maintain a presence as the voice of the electrical contractor. NECA’s outreach efforts also extend to developing equitable standards of contracting and bidding procedures and improving relations between general and specialty contractors.



In pursuit of good government, NECA has established the *Electrical Construction Political Action Committee* through which member contractors can contribute to the election of legislators supportive of our members’ interests. Candidates who receive ECPAC assistance are chosen on the basis of their support for the association’s policies and goals and not with regard to party affiliation. This political action committee has achieved a notable win-record in congressional races.

## **HOW DOES NECA HELP ITS MEMBERS’ MARKET THEIR SERVICES TO BUYING DECISION-MAKERS?**

The fact that effective marketing is crucial to the successful operation of any electrical contracting business is no news to NECA: Ours was the first construction industry association to establish marketing support for members. This support includes matching qualified buyers to members through the NECA Connection (see box at the top of the next page), keeping members informed of changes in the marketplace, and providing national promotion and education thus ensuring NECA contractors expanding opportunities for their services.

Ongoing market research, often facilitated through The Electrical Contracting Foundation (page 9) helps identify and develop potential for new sales opportunities. In addition to NECA’s national research activities, many chapters also undertake studies related to local markets, often with help from the National Labor-Management Cooperation Committee (page 10). Most of this research provides information of direct value to electrical contractors and is passed on to NECA members immediately.

Because NECA is ever-alert to the influences that rapid changes within the industry can have on contractor marketing efforts, special action programs are

## How Buyers Looking To “Find A Contractor” Meet Their Match

**H**A VE YOU HEARD OF THE “NECA CONNECTION”?  
A lot of satisfied project owners have!

Every month, thousands of buyers of electrical contracting and voice-data-video services access this specialized “search engine” through NECA’s Internet site at <http://www.necanet.org>, or by going directly to our “Find A Contractor” site (<http://www.necaconnection.com>), or by calling a toll-free hotline (1-800-888-NECA).

All three methods are heavily promoted – in trade publications and by direct mail to construction-buying decision-makers and other means – and our advertising has paid off, matching NECA-member contractors with well over a *billion* dollars worth of retrofit, maintenance, modernization and new construction jobs!

When a potential customer accesses the NECA Connection on the Internet, he or she is presented a short questionnaire seeking information about the location and scope of the job for which a qualified contractor is needed. In seconds after completion of this form, a list of NECA members that meet the customer’s specifications pops up on the screen. If the customer instead calls the hotline, an operator will ask the same questions and then fax the resulting list of matching NECA members to the customer. In either case, it’s then up to the customer to contact the NECA members which were listed.

All current NECA members — and only current members — are eligible to be referred to potential buyers through this unique service.

implemented as warranted in order to take advantage of new market developments. (An example is the Voice-Data-Video program discussed on page 12). And, sales training, such as provided through NECA’s Management Education Institute (page 11) is part of a systematic effort to develop market opportunities for electrical contractors to their greatest potential.

Effective advertising programs designed to inform the public of the NECA contractor’s professional expertise have been sponsored for many years. Publications distributed to decision-makers by NECA chapters – such as the *Electrical Design Library* reports that provide in-depth technical information, or the *National Installation Standards™* (page 14) – also help illustrate the first-rate quality available from NECA contractors.

NECA also enacts many public relations programs to help create a favorable climate for doing business. An active PR Office makes sure that news on NECA’s activities, initiatives, and positions are distributed to relevant media. The information services discussed on pages 7-9 help spread the word. NECA’s public relations effort also involves liaison with government officials, other organizations in the construction industry and the public at large, as well as with members.

All these efforts, and many others mentioned in this booklet, all combine to help create a “brand preference” for the services of NECA-member contractors. Moreover, they all work together to enable NECA to most effectively carry out its mission to represent, promote, and advance the interests of its members.

## Even More Benefits Exclusive To NECA-Member Contractors!

**T**he world is full of vendors offering discount plans to reward large purchasers of particular items with discounts. Unfortunately, the savings just aren’t there for many business owners, and many business owners are put off by the hassles involved with signing up.

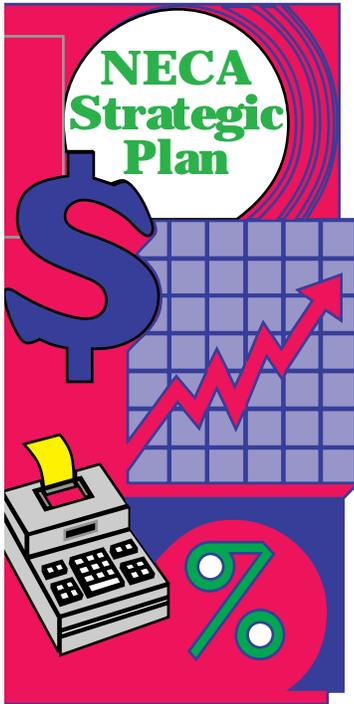
That’s why, in the summer of 2001, NECA began rolling out a series of new benefits which leverage the collective purchasing power of members and provide savings on products and services NECA contractors use every day. The beauty of the *NECA Value-Added Services* is that aggregated buying-power secures discounts for all members, regardless of the purchases made by any individual member, and the sign-up requirement couldn’t be simpler: Being a NECA member is all it takes!

Only readily identifiable products and services from top-tier providers are eligible for inclusion on the

list. Categories already on line or considered for future development include: Fleet & Fuel, Business Information, Computers & Software, Insurance, Package Shipping, Telecommunications, Travel, Financial Services, Energy Services, Health Care, Human Resources, Internet Services, Merchant Services, and Office Supplies.

NECA adds value for its members by identifying good, brand-name offerings; qualifying the discounts or enhancements available; keeping the enrollment process simple; and keeping members informed about the value and availability of these products and services. You can learn more about NECA Value-Added Services on NECA’s site at <http://www.necanet.org> or at <http://www.necanet.org/benefits>, but, of course, you need to be a NECA member to take advantage of these benefits and the many others discussed in this booklet!

## WHERE DOES NECA GO FROM HERE?



When NECA celebrated its 100th anniversary in 2001, it was not only a time for looking back and for commemorating the association's proud past; it was also a time for looking ahead and planning an even more electrifying future. At its 2001 meeting, NECA's Board of Governors approved the association's Strategic Plan. Its purpose is to guide NECA in realizing our vision as a dynamic national organization serving the management interests of the entire technical contracting industry.

This document was developed over the course of many months, with much input from NECA-member contractors, staff, and consultants. It is a long-term strategic plan, and its broad goals are expected to stand for decades. However, it also addresses short-term initiatives pertinent to five priority issues. Standing committees and other designated groups are working on these initiatives in order to create NECA's "Envisioned Future" (see page 3). The priority issues and related initiatives are as follow:

### NECA's Strategic Agenda

#### Workforce Shortages and the Changing Workforce.

Similar to most American industries, the electrical construction industry is experiencing a shortage of qualified and skilled workers at both the craftworker and managerial levels. This is not just a temporary situation, but a long-term structural problem. In addition, the demographics and character of the workforce is changing. Therefore, NECA is developing:

- 1 Strategies and programs to increase and improve the craftworker and management workforce.
- 2 Strategies and programs to address demographic, diversity and generational issues.
- 3 Strategies and programs to promote management innovation and increase productivity.

**Technology Challenges.** The electrical construction industry is an industry based on technological change. Today, the focus has shifted from power technologies to information technologies. This same transformation impacts the management aspects of an electrical contractor's operations in terms of electronic commerce and e-construction applications. In responding to member needs, NECA itself must adapt to new technologies and electronic means of communication and commerce. Therefore, NECA is developing:

- 1 Strategies and programs to assist members with electronic commerce, e-construction, and other emerging technology issues.
- 2 Strategies and programs to advance NECA's adoption of new technology.

**Business Development.** The traditional model for the electrical contracting industry is changing rapidly. Channels of distribution are changing. Mergers and consolidations have reshaped the industry. The prospect of utility deregulation has altered the business environment. Methods of procurement are undergoing a transformation. One-stop shopping and labor-only contracts are part of the new equation. The industry is growing into new markets such as voice-data-video. Therefore, NECA is developing:

- 1 Strategies and programs to address the impact of utility deregulation, consolidations, changes in distribution channels, and methods of procurement.
- 2 Strategies and programs to assist electrical contractor expansion into the VDV and wireless marketplace.

**Image.** The image of the electrical construction industry impacts the business of electrical contracting in many ways. It affects the recruitment and retention of workers. It affects a customer's perception of quality and value. It affects the general public's concerns regarding safe and reliable systems. Therefore, NECA is developing:

- 1 Strategies and programs to improve the electrical construction industry's and NECA's image and visibility.

**Membership.** NECA's structure must accommodate the needs of a diverse membership. NECA must also compete for a member's time and must effectively use the talents and resources of its volunteers. Therefore, NECA is developing:

- 1 Strategies and programs to address the service and representation interests of all member segments, including small contractors, outside line constructors, and VDV contractors.
- 2 Strategies and programs to most effectively use the time, talents and resources of member volunteers.

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