

State Regulatory Framework for HVAC/R Work

State laws require registration or licensure for construction, electrical, and plumbing contractors, and certification for electrical administrators, electricians, and plumbers. These laws are administered and enforced by the Department of Labor and Industries (L&I).

Depending on the type of HVAC/R work that a contractor performs, state law may require that the contractor be registered as a general or specialty construction contractor or licensed as an electrical contractor or both.

- **Contractors** (*chapter 18.27 RCW*)

Contractors are defined as persons who “in the pursuit of an independent business undertakes to, or offers to undertake, or submits a bid to, construct, alter, repair, add to, subtract from improve, develop, move, wreck, or demolish any building, highway, road, railroad, excavation, or other structure, project, development, or improvement attached to real estate...”

Contractors must register with the L&I as either a general contractor or a specialty contractor. A general contractor may perform or supervise numerous building trades or crafts while a specialty contractor may perform or supervise one building trade or craft. One of the contractor specialties is HVAC.

When registering, a contractor must provide the L&I with certain information, including a social security number, a unified business identifier (UBI) number, type of contracting activity, and names and addresses of owners, partners, officers, and members. Surety bonds and liability insurance are also required for contractors.

- **Electricians and Electrical Contractors** (*chapter 19.28 RCW*)

When HVAC/R work has an electrical aspect, that work must be performed by a certified electrician. These electricians may be certified as journeyman electricians or as HVAC/R specialty electricians.

In addition to passing a competency examination and completing the required classroom hours, electricians must also have the required amount of experience working as an electrical trainee under the supervision of a certified electrician

A general journeyman electrician qualifies to work in all specialties of electrical work. To be certified at this level, the applicant must document 8,000 hours, 4,000 of those must be in commercial or industrial installation.

The specialty electrician certification qualifies electricians to work in one or more electrical specialties. These include specialties in HVAC/refrigeration systems as well as a restricted HVAC/refrigeration specialty. An applicant for the HVAC/refrigeration systems specialty must complete 4,000 hours. The restricted HVAC/refrigeration systems requires 2,000 hours.

If a contractor performs electrical work, the contractor must be licensed as an electrical contractor. Electrical contractors are defined as persons that “offers to undertake, undertakes, submits a bid for, or does the work of installing or maintaining wires or equipment that convey electrical current.”

In order to be licensed, an electrical contractor must provide the L&I with a UBI number, contact information for the company, and social security numbers for each owner as well as information about their role in the company. Electrical contractors must also designate an electrical administrator to ensure that the electrical contractor’s work is in compliance with electrical laws and rules. To be certified as an electrical administrator, applicants must have either a current Washington State Administrator or Master Electrician certificate and pass an examination.

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