

Ohio Electrical Code Coalition

Status of Ohio's adoption of the National Electrical Code

This letter provides a background on the challenges the electrical industry is being faced with regarding the status of Ohio's adoption of the 2011 NEC® for 1, 2 & 3 family dwellings. Additionally, we hope to garner support with Ohio's adoption of the 2011 NEC® without amendment, along with continuing to support the current three year adoption cycle.

Ohio has been a national leader by recognizing the importance of adopting the most up-to-date edition of the NEC®. This philosophy ensures leading edge technology is installed and used safely in order for the public to derive their full benefit. The Ohio Board of Building Standards (the state agency responsible for adoption of Ohio's construction codes) recognizes the value of the NFPA's codes and standards development consensus process, which is accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and the foundation of this process is built on the fundamental tenants of openness, due process, transparency, and balance of represented interests. Consequently, the OBBS has always adopted the NEC® in a timely manner, soon after the process is complete at the national level. Additionally, the OBBS has always recognized the (NFPA) process utilizes a comprehensive pool of professional expertise and safety knowledge and has not amended the Code with past editions.

Ohio's code adoption process follows two different paths, based on use and occupancy of a building/structure. One code addresses 1, 2 & 3 family dwellings (Residential Code of Ohio (RCO)) and the second is for all other structures (Ohio Building Code (OBC)- includes 4-family dwellings and larger). When either of these two codes is updated, the current version of the NEC® is also adopted. Ohio adopted the 2011 NEC® without amendments, for all structures except 1, 2 & 3 family dwellings, with an effective date of 11/1/11. The residential code is still under review and despite no amendments were included with the 2011 NEC® when updating the OBC, the Residential Construction Advisory Committee (statutory committee responsible for reviewing and recommending adoption of Ohio's residential code)) has proposed two amendments so far:

1. To eliminate GFCI protection for garage door openers (NEC 210.8(A)(2); and
2. Eliminate GFCI protection for sump pumps in basements (NEC 210.8(A)(5).

As mentioned previously, the NEC® development process is ANSI accredited and changes to the NEC® are thoroughly vetted by a broad cross-section of experts, which include a balance of interests. The proposed amendments are actually subject matter that has already been debated at every step in the standards development process-up-to and including appeal to the NFPA Standards Council.

The second issue that has raised concern in the industry is the philosophy to move Ohio's adoption process, which is currently aligned with the national adoption cycle (3 year), to a 6 year cycle. The electrical industry is known for constantly moving forward in utilization and safety technology. Examples include those associated with electric vehicles and alternative energy systems like solar photovoltaic and wind power. The advancement of these types of systems requires continuous updating and review of regulatory documents in order to keep the requirements on par with current technology. Outdated requirements can pose roadblocks to implementation of important initiatives such as the current trend towards "green technologies". In addition, advancements in electrical equipment have made the systems that power our homes and workplaces even safer. The current 3-year revision cycle is more important than ever in making sure that the NEC is up-to-date.

In effort to ensure Ohio stays at the forefront of electrical safety, the electrical industry has put together a code coalition, which is comprised of representatives interested in supporting the initiative of timely adoption of the NEC® without amendments. This coalition is following the lead of the National Code Coalition. Attached is an NFPA News release from earlier this year, recognizing proclamations signed by nine member organizations. Also attached is the proclamation supporting adoption. I am hoping you can help with this state coalition by becoming an active member to support its objectives.

Thank you for your time and I look forward to hearing from you.