

Energy

BULLETIN

Office of **ENERGY WA**

Technical & Safety Division

20 Southport Street

West Leederville (Perth)

Western Australia 6007

Telephone: (08) 9422 5200 Fax: (08) 9422 5222

Web: www.energy.wa.gov.au

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Inaugural Electrical Safety Award

This year, with the support and sponsorship of the Office of Energy, the Electrical Contractors Association introduced an “Electrical Safety Award” into its Excellence Awards.

It gave me a great deal of pleasure to present the award to Mark Dalglish of Nu-Power Electrics, at what was a very well attended industry gala night at the Rendezvous Observation City Hotel on 11 September 1999.

In accepting the Award, Mark acknowledged the contributions of his staff and their efforts to constantly search for safer practices to apply to all aspects of their business.



Also at the Excellence Awards, Michelle Redgewell became the first woman to receive the prestigious “Apprentice of the Year Award” in the Electrical Division.

The Office of Energy congratulates these and other winners of the various categories. These Awards for Excellence give due recognition to those who are competitive and strive for excellence.

Albert Koenig

ALBERT KOENIG
DIRECTOR OF ENERGY SAFETY

Office of Energy Activities 1998-99

This edition of the Energy Bulletin focuses on the highlights and activities of the Technical & Safety Division of the Office of Energy during the period July 1998 to June 1999.

This information includes details of industry's overall electrical and gas safety outcomes, which will be of general industry interest.

Policy Issues

Updating of the Gas Standards Regulations 1983

This work has been completed following extensive industry consultation. It resulted in many improvements and complete redrafting of the regulations to refer to national codes, improve clarity and more identifiably focus on gasfitting and consumers' gas installations. These new Regulations are titled the *Gas Standards (Gasfitting and Consumer Gas Installations) Regulations 1999*.

A major promotion campaign was launched in April 1999 to explain the new regulations to industry participants in all major regional areas of the State. As part of the redrafting, separate regulations were also issued to cover natural gas quality within the distribution system.

Safety of Electricity and Gas Supply Facilities (eg. those of Western Power and AlintaGas)

Negotiations with electricity suppliers for the introduction of new safety regulations were not successful. The Minister has now requested that a joint regulator-electricity supplier working party be formed to develop the regulations by the end of 1999. In the meantime, a set of formal Guidelines for Electricity Transmission and Distribution Work in WA was issued by the Director of Energy Safety, to establish clear, minimum safety standards.

Agreement was reached with industry stakeholders on the content and structure of the proposed Gas Supply Regulations and instructions were forwarded to Parliamentary

Counsel, for formal drafting (these regulations are expected to be finalised late in 1999).

Development of the New Safety Regulatory Schemes for Electrical and Gas Appliances

Significant negotiations were undertaken during the year. Through the national Electrical Regulatory Authorities Council (ERAC) of which the Office of Energy is a member, agreement was reached between regulators and industry on an Australia-New Zealand harmonisation program for electrical appliances, to the extent that each jurisdiction now needs to implement legislation changes.

In regard to gas appliances, similar negotiations with NZ, via the national Gas Technical Regulators' Committee (GTRC) of which Mel Stokes of the Office of Energy is chair, are progressing with a final outcome now expected to be decided during the second half of 1999. The Australia-New Zealand Minerals and Energy Council (ANZMEC) has been monitoring the progress of these important negotiations, which have arisen from the effects of the Trans Tasman Mutual Recognition Agreement.

Trees and Power Lines

Limited progress has been made with the drafting of proposed new vegetation control legislation under the *Electricity Act 1945*. It is hoped to finalise this legislation together with the associated regulations and a code of practice, in liaison with the supply authorities and other key parties, during 1999-2000.

Regulatory Regime for LPG Refrigerants

An information paper on the subject, proposing an appropriate regulatory framework, was published in June/July 1999. The paper received broad industry support but the matter has not progressed as the necessary supporting legislation has not yet been drafted.

Effect of Gas Quality on Gas Appliances

The entry of additional gas producers to the south-west gas market will enhance market competition, but may result in the quality of natural gas moving towards the limits of the specification. As it is important that possible safety implications and domestic gas appliance

performance concerns arising from such a change are identified, a series of tests was commissioned on gas appliances using gas of varying quality. The tests indicated that for safety and good performance, gas consumers should have their appliances regularly serviced and certain pre-1980 natural gas appliances should have safety devices retro-fitted or be replaced. This will now be the subject of a promotion campaign in conjunction with AlintaGas.

Gas and Electrical Inspections

Auditing of Electricity and Gas Suppliers' Consumer Installation Inspection Practices

In accordance with statutory requirements, all primary suppliers of electricity and gas (NG and LPG) to the public such as Western Power, AlintaGas, and Wesfarmers Kleenheat conduct safety inspections of their consumers' installations under Inspection Plans and Policy Statements that are approved by the Director of Energy Safety.

During the year, their operations were audited for regulatory compliance. This proved to be valuable as significant deficiencies were found in some of the inspection practices. Formal orders were issued by the Director where necessary, to correct such shortcomings.

Gas Inspection Operations

The Office's own gas inspection operations during the year included:

- 6 inspections of mine sites;
- 195 autogas installation inspections;
- 212 caravan/campervan gas installation inspections;
- 37 marine craft gas installation inspections;
- 72 regulatory investigations relating to alleged breaches of regulations;
- 68 appliance retail audits;
- 93 hire/camping company audits;
- 247 individual gas appliance approvals; and
- 266 audit inspections of second hand resale outlets.

Electrical Inspection Operations

The Office's own electrical inspection operations during the year included:

- 508 inspections of mine sites;
- 530 inspections of installations not supplied from utility supply systems;
- investigations into breaches of the *Electricity Act 1945* and Regulations, resulting in 51 prosecutions and 128 warnings;
- investigations into various types of reported electrical safety incidents including fatalities;
- audits of electrical appliance retailers, in respect of compliance with statutory safety and energy efficiency labelling requirements;
- surveys/audits of electrical contractor/air conditioning installers' work systems and practices; and
- safety assessments and approvals of various types of electrical appliances/products.

Electricity Related Incidents

478 electric shocks and 40 accidents, including 5 electrocutions, were reported. The accidental fatalities arose as follows:

1. A fisherman attempted to reset an overload device on a switchboard and touched a live 240 volt terminal.
2. A man received an electric shock when he cut a tree branch that contacted a high voltage (22,000 volt) power line.
3. A telephone installer touched a live 240 volt terminal with a piece of fencing wire. It is believed he was using this wire to retrieve a telephone cable in a roof space.
4. A member of the public climbed to the top of a train (without authority) and came into contact with the high voltage (25,000 volt) conductor supplying the traction system.
5. A man touched a live (at 240 volts) carbonated drink-dispensing machine. The machine's compressor was live due to an active to earth connection (fault) and the machine was not correctly earthed.

Gas Related Incidents

27 gas related incidents were reported. None were fatal, but 9 of the incidents involved injuries to 10 persons.

Two of the injured required hospitalisation after receiving burns to the face and upper limbs. One person was injured whilst attempting to light a gas wall oven that had a

faulty flame failure device. The other person was injured when attempting to relight a home-made portable LP gas appliance that did not have any safety compliance certification.

The accidental and undetected release of LP gas in a shop at Newman caused an explosion that resulted in major property damage to a number of businesses housed in the same shopping centre. No injuries resulted from this explosion as it occurred in the early hours of the morning.



Gas and Electrical Licensing

General

Electrical worker and contractor (ie. operative) licensing is carried out by the Office of Energy under the policies of the Electrical Licensing Board, which is constituted under the provisions of the *Electricity (Licensing) Regulations 1991*. Members of the Board are appointed by the Minister. The current Board is in the second year of its term, which is due to expire on 31 October 2000 (see photograph on page 5).

Electrical Licensing Board Members as at 30 June 1999 were:

1. Mr R Pritchard—Chairman, self-employed Consulting Engineer
2. Mr T Banton—Nominated by the WA Department of Training
3. Mr R Briggs—Nominated by the Office of Energy (Bob Briggs retired on 16 September 1999 after many years of dedicated service on the Board)
4. Mr R Campbell—Nominated by the Electrical Contractors Association
5. Mr C Dundas—Appointed as a person with knowledge of restricted electrical work
6. Mr J Jarvis—Nominated by the Chamber of Mines and Energy and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of WA (Inc)
7. Mr J Murie—Nominated by the Communications, Electrical, Electronic,

Energy, Information, Postal, Plumbing and Allied Workers Union (CEPU)

The Board once again found itself dealing with a busy disciplinary schedule covering a total of 40 disciplinary investigations, including three formal proceedings. As a result, four electrical workers had their licences cancelled/suspended or a condition placed on their licence and six electrical contractors had their licences cancelled. Nine persons were required to undertake an assessment to demonstrate their competence, two were required to undergo training and 23 were censured.

The authority for licensing gas fitters is vested in the Director of Energy Safety. During the year, there were 22 disciplinary interviews of gas fitters that had been referred by gas undertakers concerned with the standard of gasfitting carried out by these operatives. The outcome from this process has been that some gas fitters undertook further training and others were censured.

Gas and Electrical Licences Issued

During 1998-99, there were 409 certificates, permits and authorisations issued to industry for gasfitting work, taking the total gas operatives registered to 6,035. Similarly, a total of 1,602 electrical worker licences of various kinds and 245 contractor and in-house licences were issued to industry taking the total electrical operatives registered to 24,481.

Changes to Gas Fitter Licensing

Administration

On 1 May 1999, the administration of the gas licensing system changed in line with the introduction of the *Gas Standards (Gasfitting and Consumer Gas Installations) Regulations 1999*. Transition arrangements have been put in place.

The new gas licensing system consists of four class types:

New Class Type	Description
G	All gasfitting work except gasfitting work classed as I, E or P.
I	Gasfitting work: (a) on a consumer's gas installation associated with Type B appliance; or (b) on piping that has an operating pressure of more than 200 kPa, not being gasfitting work referred to in paragraph (a) or classified as E or P.
E	Gasfitting work associated with a mobile engine.
P	Gasfitting work on a gas installation associated with the refuelling of motor vehicles.

Improvements to Services

During the year, the Licensing Office:

- introduced EFTPOS payments for over-the-counter payments of licences and purchases of publications;
- simplified administrative arrangements for electrical contractors who are now able to sign a declaration on their registration renewal attesting to the fact that they have the appropriate insurance cover; and
- spread the expiry dates for the renewals for electrical workers' licences, to avoid a work peak and so permit the maintenance of normal services throughout the year.

In an effort to further improve the level of service, the Licensing Office carried out a customer survey during May 1999. A questionnaire was sent to two thousand electrical and gas operatives to survey their views. The survey concentrated on the current level of service provided and sought suggestions on which other services licence holders would like introduced. The outcomes from this survey will form the basis of future improvements.



Members of the Electrical Licensing Board are, back row, left to right, Bob Briggs, Jim Jarvis, Craig Dundas and Terry Banton and, front row, left to right, Ross Campbell, Bob Pritchard (Chairman) and Jim Murie

Industry Liaison, Communication and Safety Promotion

Gas and Electrical Public Safety

This year's public safety campaign was planned to require less expenditure. A series of newspaper advertisements was run and leaflets were distributed, featuring the safe use of LPG in boats and as part of leisure activities. The program also focussed on the safe use of electrical cords and socket adaptors. The Office also conducted a display on the safe use of gas at the AlintaGas Home Style Expo, Claremont.

The Office of Energy launched the 'Code of Practice for the Sale of Electrical Installation Products to the Public' in September 1998, after finalising the Code in conjunction with the Retail Traders' Association. The Code recommends that the packaging of electrical products should carry a prominent label, there should be warning posters on display shelves, prominent warning notices should be displayed on advertisements and that sales staff advise customers to use a licensed electrical contractor to install such products, rather than give tips for DIY.

Industry Displays, Presentations and Sponsorship

Displays to improve electrical and gas industry participants' awareness of regulatory requirements and the role of the Office were held at:

- MM Expo, Kalgoorlie;
- MIENEX 99, Perth;
- Institution of Electrical Engineers, WA Conference and Trade Exhibition, Perth;
- Electrical Contractors Association 'Awards for Excellence', Scarborough; and
- Gas Industry Presentations at various venues around the State.

Guidelines for Safe Working with Gas in Consumers' Installations

The Office of Energy's new publication "Guidelines for Safe Working with Gas in Consumers' Installations" was released to industry at a series of seminars for gas fitters throughout the State, during the second half of 1998-99. It received a very positive response.

Website Launch

The Office of Energy's new Internet site went on line in early 1999. Readers are invited to visit the Office of Energy site at:

www.energy.wa.gov.au

Emergency Management

State Emergency Management

The Office of Energy is an active member of the State Emergency Management Advisory Committee (SEMAC) which is chaired by the Commissioner of Police. In its role, the Office is directly responsible for managing any liquid petroleum fuel shortages in the State. During 1998-99, the Office finalised, and had accepted by SEMAC, its formal Plan for dealing with such emergencies.

Lifelines Emergency Management Committee

At the request of SEMAC, the Office formed and chairs the State Lifelines Emergency Management Committee. The first meeting was held in July 1998. The role of this committee (which reports to SEMAC) is to facilitate the planning and coordination of lifeline agency emergency management. Its membership includes various utilities and infrastructure providers such as electricity, gas, communications, water, roads and rail.

Award

During the year there were a number of real emergencies. A cyclone caused very serious damage to Exmouth and Moora was badly flooded. The Office played its role within the SEMAC response framework and also provided on-site personnel. Staff were proud to have this recognised in the form of an award from the Governor.

For enquiries on articles in this Energy Bulletin, please contact Harry Hills, Office of Energy:

Tel: 08 9422 5208

Fax: 08 9422 5244

URL: hhills@energy.wa.gov.au

The Office of Energy website is located at:

www.energy.wa.gov.au

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