

# ClientCurrents

News & Views for Building Professionals

**United for Quality.**

**THE ELECTRICAL ALLIANCE**  
National Electrical Contractors Association and Local 26 IBEW



## Are Your Systems Up to Date? Maintaining Your Electrical Systems Key in Tight Economy

**A**ccording to the U.S. Energy Information Agency, electricity consumption in the commercial buildings sector doubled between 1980 and 2000. We use more electricity now than ever to power office equipment, air conditioning units, and lighting systems, and while it's tempting in the down economy to forgo that routine maintenance appointment or electrical system upgrade, it may actually cost you more.

"Testing and analysis of electrical systems along with an active preventative maintenance program ensures that our client's equipment is working at its peak, following current codes, and providing a safe environment for their workers," says Ken Bassett of Potomac Testing, Inc.

Electrical contractors of the Electrical Alliance, a cooperative effort between the Washington, DC Chapter of National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) and Local 26, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW) are trained in the latest energy-saving techniques and building code requirements and offer competitive solutions to electrical concerns.

Not only can upgrades increase energy efficiency and cut utility costs, keeping everything in working order can also prevent unexpected and costly emergency work in the future.

"I don't know why, but most emergency jobs happen after hours," says Andy Long, superintendent at Regional Electric. "And then customers are paying overtime rates for repairs that could have been addressed during the week."

Typical maintenance and renovation projects include fire alarm upgrades, emergency generator installations, circuit breaker upgrades, and lighting and energy systems upgrades for increased energy efficiency.

### Fire Alarm Systems

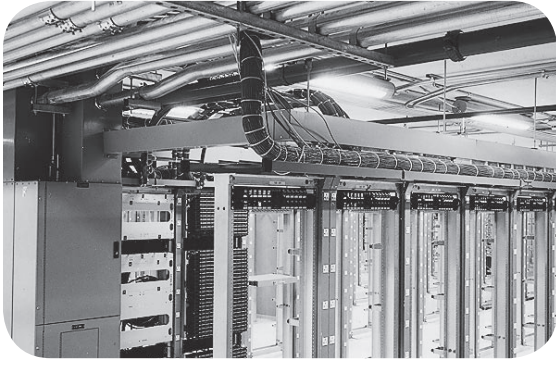
Evaluating and upgrading fire alarm systems can help to prevent future lawsuits. Electrical contractors evaluate buildings' systems and repair or upgrade them to make sure they meet the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) code requirements. For example, a skilled electrician will check to make sure the alarms include the proper flashing lights for the hearing impaired and are in the correct locations.



**Homes and commercial buildings use 71% of the electricity in the United States and this number will rise to 75% by 2025.**

- U.S. Energy Information Agency

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## Are Your Systems Up To date?

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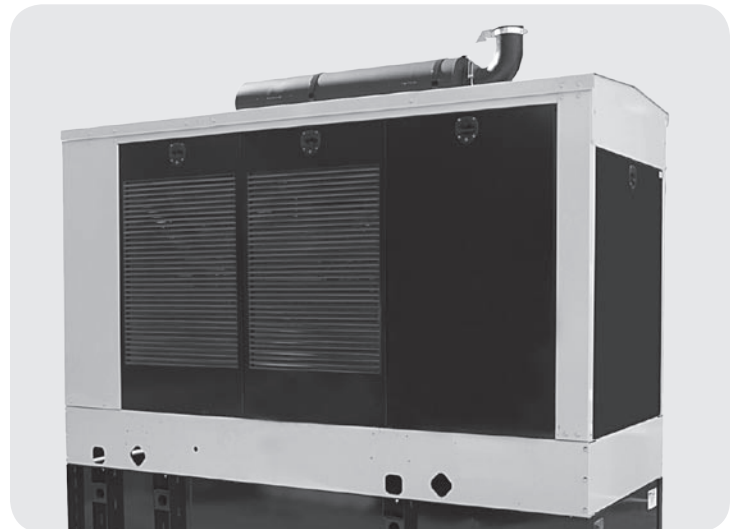
### Emergency Generators

Power outages can come out of nowhere and put a halt to business activities at any time. They can be caused by a variety of problems, such as storms or a transformer going bad. Electrical contractors can install an emergency generator to keep critical computer and other electronic equipment going preventing lost time and employee inefficiency.

### Enhanced Circuit Breaker Capacity

Many buildings face significant limitations in circuit capacity which is necessary to accommodate today's technology needs.

"Since many buildings in the Washington, DC region were built before our technology requirements increased, the service is outdated and building owners should install larger circuit boxes to accommodate their needs," explains Long.



## Typical Maintenance and Repair Services

- Fire Alarm Upgrades to Meet ADA Requirements
- Emergency Generator Installation
- Increased Capacity Circuit Breaker Installation
- Lighting Systems Upgrades for Energy Efficiency
- Energy Management System Upgrades for Energy Efficiency

### Lighting and Energy Systems

Electrical contractors are also trained in the latest green technologies. They evaluate lighting systems and install more energy efficient systems, such as motion and natural light detecting systems, which save building owners money on their electrical bills. Energy management systems can also be upgraded to save power. For example, variable frequency drives can be installed on the building's motors to limit their surge on power companies and cut the owner's utility bill.

"Building owners don't need to gut a system and start over if they're working with a tight budget," adds Thang Nguyen, assistant executive director of NECA. "Usually, they can cut their energy costs and improve their capabilities with simple upgrades or repairs."

Building owners who continue their routine maintenance and upgrades a little at a time will benefit in the long run.

"Building maintenance managers should continually make small repairs so they don't get hit all at one time when something goes wrong," cautions Long.