

## › ESFI—Your Electrical Safety Resource

*Brett Brenner, President, Electrical Safety Foundation International*



May is National Electrical Safety Month and a terrific time to start thinking about electrical safety. During this official month of observance,

national attention is focused on the importance of practicing electrical safety habits and maintaining a healthy respect for electricity. But one month out of the year is not enough. Electrical safety needs to be a priority all year long—in every home, school, and workplace. Each year, hundreds of people die and thousands are injured as a result of electrically-related incidents—many of which could have been prevented. Awareness and education play a key role in reducing these tragic statistics.

The Electrical Safety Foundation International (ESFI) is dedicated exclusively to reducing electrically-related fires, injuries, fatalities, and property loss through education,

awareness, and advocacy. We proudly sponsor National Electrical Safety Month each May, but our commitment to electrical safety continues year-round. ESFI is constantly developing new outreach and awareness programs designed to address the needs of identified at-risk groups, highlight specific electrical hazards, and focus attention on advanced safety technologies.

Today, ESFI is making it easier than ever for safety advocates, employers, educators, and consumers to find and utilize our newest safety resources by making all of our content accessible right where people are most likely to look—on the Internet.

ESFI's extensive collection of educational tools and resources, from campaign toolkits to safety videos, can be downloaded at no cost on the foundation's website at [www.electrical-safety.org](http://www.electrical-safety.org). In addition, we've developed some unique awareness tools that provide interactive learning experiences right on your own computer. Take a tour

of ESFI's *Virtual Home* to learn more about your home's electrical system and the electrical devices you use every day. Test your fire safety knowledge with the *Virtual Fire Drill*, and get the kids thinking about electrical safety with the entertaining games and videos in our *Kids' Corner*.

ESFI has also joined the world of social media, leveraging the widespread popularity of channels like Facebook and Twitter to help spread the word about electrical safety. Now you can keep up with all of our latest campaigns and activities by following @ESFI dot org on Twitter and becoming a fan of ESFI on Facebook.

Electrical technology is evolving quickly and electrical safety needs are changing. It can be difficult to keep up and to know where to turn for reliable, quality resources. Remember that ESFI is your resource for electrical safety awareness information and materials during National Electrical Safety Month and beyond. ☎

## › Codes and Standards: Education Behind the Process

*Scott Edwards, Vice President, Fire Protection Products, Gentex Corporation*



Recently, the director of the National Institute of Standards and Technology said, "Today, more than ever, standards are an imperative undertaking."

While I agree with this statement, I believe they have been an imperative undertaking for many years. They may be more complicated today, and for that reason alone we need to stress the importance of their development to our corporations.

Our success in the past with codes and standards (C&S) development was largely because of the simplicity of the technology. Today, as technology has advanced, more rules, regulations, and procedures apply to the development of standards.

Standards have made significant contributions to the development of innovative products and have given us as a country a competitive spirit that is observed by the rest of the world. However, standards that contain provisions that are contrary to rules, regulations, and procedures can lead to dissention. This dissention can be prevented through education.

### **EDUCATION IS KEY**

Dissention and conflict within an organization may not be viewed favorably by management. This can lead them to question their involvement and/or the value of C&S to the organization. The appearance of conflict, dissention, and motive can even lead individual states to adopt one code over another.

The image we project as C&S developers does not go unnoticed. If we want to continue to be a part of the developmental process, we need to educate and train our employees.

There has always been a delicate balance between individual companies' interest

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in C&S and the interest of society as a whole. Companies are struggling to grow the bottom line now more than ever before. In some cases, however, C&S is viewed as an added expense. This wasn't always the case; 27 years ago, they were being developed by presidents and vice presidents.

Organizations now employ industry affairs personnel to work on C&S development. To justify their cost, these individuals are tasked not only in protecting product portfolios from the onslaught of the competition's products through specifically written C&S that could limit sales, but they also may develop requirements that highlight research and development efforts.

It all goes back to that delicate balance between what is good for the company and the standards community as a whole. That balance could be easily remedied through education. We need to train individuals in the entire process. It is much more than simply writing

a specific provision. More than ever, individuals need to be cognizant of the American National Standards Institute's (ANSI) requirements on essential patent provisions, trademarks, copyrights, and other parameters.

We all know technology has changed dramatically over the past decade, and through this advancement in technology came more patents. With more patented products came the importance of the essential patent procedures of the standards development organization (SDO). But it goes beyond patent disclosure; it goes to the use of trademarks and copyright provisions in standards to conformity assessment and so much more. C&S development today is much more complicated than ever. We cannot develop them in a vacuum.

More than 16 years ago when I was a NEMA section chairman, I started an annual meeting off with the following remarks:

"There is a freight train coming and it is called XYZ SDO."

This SDO was new, it was fresh, and it was the combination of many smaller ones into one larger organization. It had momentum, just like a runaway freight train. What it also had was credibility. There was no evident special interest on the technical panels. The individuals on them used C&S, and they were very well educated and familiar with the developmental process.

If we want to regain the credibility we once enjoyed as an industry, we need to educate those who work on C&S development. We need to develop relationships that are founded on trust. I have always said that life is based on relationships. Ignorance is not an excuse.

Educate yourself in the developmental process, learn what goes into writing a code or standard, and develop long-term trusting relationships. If we don't do these things now, we will be on the outside looking in. ☹

## Washington Report

### › NEMA Champions Campus Fire Safety Legislation

NEMA took to the Hill on March 22 in support of "Campus Fire Safety Day," joining industry advocates, medical professionals, college students, firefighters, parents, and life safety organizations in urging Congress to adopt the *Campus Fire Safety Education Act* (S 620/HR 1199). In total, the coalition visited 60 members of Congress.

The *Campus Fire Safety Education Act* would establish a new program that would authorize up to \$15 million per year in federal grants to eligible

colleges and universities for the purpose of educating students on fire safety. Focusing on both on- and off-campus students, grant recipients would be required to deliver education programs that focus on awareness of fire behavior, mechanisms of fire injury and death, common ignition scenarios, fire and smoke alarms, fire safety systems such as automatic sprinklers, fire extinguishers, the importance of means of egress, and fire prevention techniques. For students living on their own for the first time, such programs would prepare them to

practice fire safety during their college years and into adulthood.

NEMA also educated congressional staff on the many electrical and life safety devices manufactured by NEMA members. In addition, the coalition urged members of Congress to join the bipartisan Congressional Fire Caucus, whose 300+ members are dedicated to supporting fire responders and fire safety legislation. ☹

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