



The Safety Codes Council (the Council) is responsible for the certification of master electricians (ME) under the Safety Codes Act (Act). In 2021, the Council conducted a review of the Master Electrician Program (MEP) to gather stakeholders' perspectives on the value and purpose of the program and to identify issues, risks, and gaps. The review will help the Council develop solutions to improve the MEP.

Stakeholder engagements were completed in two phases between March and August of 2021. Phase one involved focus groups and interviews with key stakeholders. Included in this group were certified MEs, construction industry's representatives, electrical industry stakeholders, postsecondary institutions, and safety codes professionals.

Phase two comprised an online survey sent to all active MEs to gather their perspective on issues and options identified in phase one. The survey had a very good response. Over a quarter (1,200) of active MEs completed it.

This document is an overview of what the Council heard from stakeholders.

## SUMMARY

### Value of the Program

During the engagement process, stakeholders identified that the MEP brings to both stakeholders and Alberta's safety codes system the following:

- **Competency and Standards** – The MEP ensures a base level of competency, including current code knowledge, for individuals overseeing electrical installations.
- **Accountability** – Having MEs responsible for obtaining permits ensures that a qualified individual is accountable for electrical installations.
- **Safety** – Eighty-one percent of respondents agree that the program enhances safety in the electrical discipline.
- **Career Advancement** – Achieving certification is a pathway to career advancement and/or business ownership for journeypersons.
- **Mentorship of Journeypersons** – MEs oversee and mentor journeypersons.

### Role of the Master Electrician

Stakeholders identified the following as being important to the role of the ME:

- Obtaining permits and providing quality assurance and oversight of permitted electrical installations
- Being accountable for code compliance of permitted work
- Maintaining knowledge of code requirements
- Mentoring journeypersons and other staff and ensuring that staff who carry out installations understand code requirements
- Ensuring work is complete and ready to be inspected before calling for an inspection

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## THEMES

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Themes speak to issues, challenges, and opportunities the Council should consider in making improvements to the MEP.

### Oversight of Permitted Work

Stakeholders consistently identified concerns about MEs not sufficiently overseeing permitted work. In extreme cases, stakeholders reported instances of individuals obtaining permits on a fee-for-service basis without overseeing installations. When MEs don't oversee permitted work, the value of the program is undermined.

#### Key Takeaways

Clarify the roles, responsibilities, and what is expected of MEs with respect to oversight of permitted work. Provide this information to MEs and stakeholders.

Publish an MEs' roles and responsibilities document and review the current Code of Ethics to ensure alignment with legislated responsibilities.

### Experience Requirements

The majority of respondents supported maintaining current entrance qualifications (three years of experience working in the journey person's scope of practice). Thirty-one percent suggested qualifications should be increased.

#### Key Takeaways

Consider developing competency-based prequalifications for the ME certification as a future initiative.

### Performance Data and Oversight

The Council doesn't currently collect ME permitting data. Stakeholders suggested the Council collect and analyze permit and performance data to enable enhanced compliance monitoring and risk-based inspections.

#### Key Takeaways

Explore how to incorporate the data needs of the MEP in Council's plans to build and enhance data-collection systems.

### Education

All stakeholders agreed the Council should require code update training for MEs. Stakeholders were divided on whether the MEs should complete continuing professional development credits: the majority of stakeholders opposed this.

#### Key Takeaways

Work with training institutions and electrical industry's groups to identify training opportunities that support identified needs and promote these opportunities.

Consider collaborating with stakeholder groups and associations to ensure training addresses knowledge or competency gaps.

### SCO Compliance Monitoring and Enforcement

The Council learned there are inconsistent processes for verifying a ME's status before issuing permits among some accredited organizations. The Council also identified the need to clarify the MEs' roles and responsibilities to safety codes officers (SCO) in order to help them determine when a matter should be referred to the Council for further investigation. Many SCOs were unaware that the Council has a complaint and investigation framework that applies to MEs.

#### Key Takeaways

##### Clarify:

Accredited organizations' best practices and responsibilities related to the verification of active ME's status before issuing permits

Complaint process to SCOs as applicable to MEs and outline a model of progressive enforcement to give SCOs confidence that compliance oversight processes are in place

### Process Improvement

MEs were asked for their opinion on the current yearly renewal of certification and the format of the ID card.

#### Renewal Cycle

MEs were asked for their perspective on extending the renewal cycle.

##### Feedback:

Eighty percent of MEs are interested in a longer renewal cycle.

#### Key Takeaways

Consider extending the renewal cycle.

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## Process Improvement (continued)

### *ID Card Format*

MEs are currently issued a physical ID card with their name and their ME number. They present this to permit issuers when obtaining permits.

#### Feedback:

The majority of MEs do not make significant use of their card; fourteen percent almost always or always use their card.

Sixty-three percent of MEs are interested in a digital ID.

Those who don't like the digital option would like a physical card.

### Key Takeaways

There is broad support for a digital ID, but a physical card should be an option.

## THANK YOU

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The Safety Codes Council would like to thank all those that took part in the various engagements and provided feedback on the Master Electrician Program. The Council will use this information in the development of options to improve the program and to address risks and gaps in the Council's mandate and scope of authority.

The Council plans to consult further regarding these options when they are developed. The Council looks forward to continuing to work with the stakeholders on this project.