

DUTIES OF ELECTRICAL FOREMEN



YOUR COMPANY IN RELATION WITH OTHERS

Depending on the nature of the contract, your company is either a prime contractor on your project or a major subcontractor. *If you are a prime contractor*, you have the same responsibility for coordinating and expediting the job as the other prime contractors—normally the general contractor and the mechanical contractor. If your job has separate prime electrical and mechanical contracts, the “general” contractor is actually the structural contractor, and the superintendent of that company only shares responsibility with you and the on-the-job manager of the mechanical contractor.

As the structural contractor, of course, the general contractor’s schedule of concrete pouring, forming, wall erection, ceiling installation and the like will generally govern the progress of the electrical and mechanical work which must be fastened to or in the structural members. It is the responsibility of the job supervisor for each of the other prime contractors to take the initiative in meshing their schedules with those of the general contractor, other primes, and, through the prime contractors, subcontractors of the primes. If you represent a prime contractor, you will also be dealing directly with the owner and his representatives—the architect, engineers and clerk-of-the-works or job representative of the architect. You cannot sit back and wait for “orders” from a general superintendent who has no authority and no responsibility to give you such orders.

If you are representing a subcontractor, you will be subject to the direction of the general superintendent to the extent your company’s subcontract with the general contractor provides. Change order estimates, billings, shop drawing transmittals, material lists, requests for changes in specifications, and all other transactions with the owner or architect should be processed through the general contractor, unless you are doing some special work directly for another subcontractor.

Your job may have a Construction Manager. In this event your company will probably be a prime contractor, but you and representatives of other prime contractors will be dealing with the CM (Construction Manager) rather than with the owner or architect/engineer team. CM’s, acting as direct representatives of owners, coordinate the work of all of the prime contractors and of the design professionals. They often place orders for some of the materials and apparatus to be installed by contractors. Usually CM’s do no construction work with their own employees or subcontractors, with the possible exception of “General Condition Work” or temporary site facilities and security and protective services during construction.

FOREMAN JOB DESCRIPTION

I. SPECIAL RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE OWNER

1. Understand company policies and carry them out consistently.
2. Report job progress and problems to home office officials regularly, accurately and objectively. A foreman “looks good” if his job turns out well with the help, if needed, of others in the company; reports that do not reflect problems that exist do not make the foreman “look good.”
3. Profits and progress depend on paperwork. Do your regularly, completely, accurately and carefully. Be sure that all orders for changes and extra work are authorized in writing according to company procedures.

4. Remember that you are the company's representative on this job. If your company holds a prime contract, you are one of a "team" of three or four equally-responsible top construction managers on the job. Conduct yourself with the responsibility, trustworthiness, dignity, diplomacy and authority befitting such a position.

II. PLANS AND SPECIFICATIONS

1. Study and understand electrical, architectural, structural and mechanical plans. Plan well in advance how to avoid space conflicts with other crafts.
2. Keep plans and specs up-to-date with revisions on-the-job.
3. Bind all addenda in applicable sections of the spec.
4. Confer with home office management on questions which you or others have on the interpretation of plans and specifications.
5. If the construction manager, general superintendent, job inspector, clerk-of-the-works, engineer or architect instructs you to deviate from the plans and specifications you have been given, be sure to get the instructions in writing, signed by the person giving the instructions, his superior, or an official of the customer company.

III. CODE

1. Know the electrical code in effect on your job and keep applicable national, state and municipal code books on the job.
2. If you have any code questions, check with home office management to determine what was decided when the job was bid.
3. If authorized, get further necessary interpretations from the local inspector. If any interpretation by the local inspector appears improper or unreasonable, report the problem to the home office prior to proceeding with the work.
4. If the electrical inspector or a job inspector disapproves of something which has already been done and which will be costly or time-consuming to do over and you do not agree with his interpretation of the code, get further instructions from the home office before proceeding. Rules of inspectors are subject to appeal.

IV. RELATIONS WITH OTHER TRADES AND OWNERS' REPRESENTATIVES

1. Keep a harmonious working relationship with other contractors and their employees and coordinate the electrical work with their work to avoid doing anything over or losing time for any of the trades.
2. Anticipate what work others will be doing and frequently verify the general contractor's schedule and schedule changes so that you can plan your work accordingly.
3. Know what parts of the job are the responsibility of which contractors.
4. Before starting any extra work, change orders or work for other contractors, be sure to get written work orders signed by someone in authority for billing purposes.
5. Keep an accurate record of all material, labor and equipment used on all extras and change orders and report these immediately on the forms provided to the home office.

V. MANPOWER PLANNING AND SCHEDULING

1. Know the approximate time required to do each task and whether it can most efficiently be done by one worker, two, or a larger crew.
2. Plan and lay out the work so that it will comply with the specifications and codes, can be installed with the least interference to and from other trades, and will make the most efficient and uniform use of manpower, tools and equipment throughout the job.
3. Anticipate as far in advance as possible the need to increase or decrease the work force. If final decisions on hiring or reduction of force are made in the home office, advise the responsible official of your tentative schedule of manpower needs and changes in the schedule as promptly as you can determine them.
4. If you are responsible for securing your own manpower, notify the local union having jurisdiction as far ahead as you can of your approximate needs. Thereafter, notify the union of your specific require-

ments not less than 48 hours before additional applicants are needed unless it is impossible to give this much advance notice. If you need people with special abilities, such as those skilled in control work, explain this to the union dispatcher. It is wise to *call* the union so that you can learn whether the union will probably be able to fill all of your requirements but also send a *written request* and retain a copy. If you can use an apprentice, it is in order to request one. In requests for manpower comply with the law by stating that you will accept applicants regardless of face, color, religion, national origin or sex.

5. Assign each worker to available work which you and he believe he can do best.
6. Coach any worker whose skills for doing an assigned task are deficient or rusty or have him work for awhile with a journeyman who is highly skilled in that task.
7. Place each apprentice with a journeyman who can train him or her and set a good example.

VI. SUPERVISION OF EMPLOYEES

1. Always be a good example to the workers you are supervising in accuracy, honesty, fairness, workmanship, being on time, and productivity.
2. Make sure the employees under your supervision are complying with all the terms of the labor agreement and are starting work on time, remaining productively at work throughout the day and not leaving their assigned work areas until quitting time.
3. Determine and enforce a fair and adequate standard of workmanship and productivity for each employee.
4. Know and strictly enforce all job and company safety rules, set a good example of safe practices, promptly correct any potential hazard that can be corrected by your crew, report other hazards immediately to those responsible, and warn everyone on your crew of possible causes of accidents. Inattentive, careless or sloppy workers endanger themselves and others and must be warned and corrected.
5. Insist on good housekeeping.
6. Lay out jobs for the employees and make sure each knows his tasks and the most efficient methods of fulfilling them.
7. Be sure that workers have all the materials and tools they need to work as productively as possible. Anticipate needs well in advance so there is no loss of productive time waiting for tools, materials, or instructions. Insist that employees report losses or shortages of tools, parts, or materials promptly so you can take necessary corrective action.
8. Do not hesitate to remove from the job any employee who fails to perform satisfactorily. Be truthful in stating the reason why he or she was removed.
9. See that workers' time cards are made out accurately and submit them on time. Include job numbers and code for type of work performed, according to company policy. If you are not sure about the proper time to put down for some unusual activity, such as waiting time, overtime, etc., make a note of the question with the time cards so the people in the payroll office can check on the proper interpretation of the collective bargaining agreement before making payment.
10. Be familiar with the labor agreement in the area where the job is to be performed and get interpretations of any questionable item from higher management.
11. If a steward has been assigned to your job, make it your business to get acquainted with him and to establish a harmonious working relationship based on mutual respect and consideration for the responsibilities of the other. His purpose is not to give you a bad time! You might find the steward helpful to you in getting the cooperation of the employees to live up to their part of the collective bargaining agreement. Read the responsibilities and restrictions regarding the steward in the collective bargaining agreement and make sure the steward has also read them. If you find you cannot get the steward to work productively and with adequate quality, report the matter to higher management.
12. Anticipate and prepare for labor jurisdictional problems. In many cases you may be able to anticipate work, such as handling and setting of motors or electrical heating equipment, which is not in your plans and specs and which you know is usually performed by electrical workers. Discuss these anticipated problems as far ahead as possible with representatives or your company. In some cases a change order may be arranged to have this work performed by your company to avoid any jurisdictional dispute.

13. In the event of a labor dispute, make detailed notes of what happened and what was said. Report the problem promptly, accurately and completely to your home office, without distorting any facts by your personal feelings.
14. Remember, you are a member of management, and your first responsibility is to the company. If you act as you would want a foreman to represent you if you were the owner of the business and if you observe the labor agreement, you are not likely to run into any controversies or problems. However, if you do have labor problems, do not fear threats and accusations but maintain the position you believe is right until otherwise instructed by your supervisors in the company.

VII. MATERIAL REQUISITIONING AND HANDLING

1. Receive and check all materials against copies of purchase orders or stock issue forms. Make notes of all shortages and damaged items or containers, and promptly report these. Get the signature of the person delivering material on notes of apparent damages. Retain damaged shipping containers.
2. Anticipate material needs in plenty of time to place orders and get delivery without a crisis.
3. In ordering materials, use accepted terms of the type used in catalogs. If you have them available, use catalog numbers so that anyone in the home office can follow through quickly on your requisition.
4. Make sure that materials are stored where they will not be damaged, deteriorated by weather, or stolen.

VIII. TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT

1. After you have studied the plans and specs, the general construction schedule, your schedule of material delivery, and your manpower schedule, decide what tools you can effectively use on the job and discuss your needs well in advance with home office management.
2. Make sure you know everything about the proper use and maintenance of all tools and equipment on the job well enough to instruct all workers under your supervision. Check out each employee on the tools and equipment he will be using to be sure he understands everything about their proper use and care.
3. In accordance with company procedures and policies, arrange for an adequate control system to check out tools and to know at all times who has what tools and who will be responsible for their care and return.
4. Be sure that proper storage is available to protect tools from damage and theft and that all tools are returned to the places where they are to be stored.
5. Tag and remove from service any tool or construction equipment that is defective or hazardous.
6. Report missing parts to the office and get replacements or return defective tools to the shop for repair or replacement.
7. Maintain a firm policy that company tools are to be loaned to other contractors or their employees only on your authority, and make arrangements for loans or rentals of company tools and equipment in accordance with company policies and with an adequate check-out and receipt system to assure care and return of valuable company property.

IX. DAILY RECORDS

The construction business, as you well know, is a complicated and fast moving industry involving the interrelations of many different people and companies, verbal agreements, informal business methods and low profit margins. The failure of any one element in a construction project to do what has been promised in the time promised can result in your company losing money on the job. It is often very important to have some reliable notes which can be used to get the cooperation of other contractors, suppliers, and others who might not be living up to their promises or who might be causing expensive delays for your company. Sometimes the notes must be used two or three years after the noted incidents have occurred, and it is important that the record made at the time be authentic and accurate.

Seemingly small arguments or problems may become very important in processing a claim, defending against the payment of liquidated damages for causing delays in a job, handling future labor disputes, and taking care of other matters. The form provided on each page of a Job Journal can be filled out in a very few minutes each day. If it is correctly filled out it might mean the difference between making money or losing it on your job. A record made on the day an event happens or a problem is noted is legal evidence.