



Electrical Contracting Foundation

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FOUNDATION EVENTS

08-02-04 -- Foundation Begins Photovoltaic Research Project

Bethesda, MD – The Electrical Contracting Foundation voted to fund a study of the emerging photovoltaic (PV) market on July 15, 2004 at its mid-year meeting in Chicago. The research project will be led by Professor Thomas E. Glavinich, D.E., P.E., of the University of Kansas. It will estimate the size of the PV market, recommend strategies for electrical contractors to enter this business, and define best practices for installing PV systems.

Photovoltaic (also called solar energy) systems convert sunlight into electrical energy. They have been used for years, primarily to supply small loads in locations where it's infeasible to connect them to the utility grid: remote weather stations, highway emergency telephones, etc.

But a new generation of photosensitive roofing and glazing materials promises to transform and expand the use of PV by, in effect, turning whole buildings into electrical generators. This will not only reduce peak demand on electric utility grids, but feed power back into those grids under certain circumstances.

"People have been talking about applying photovoltaics in residential and commercial buildings for years, but the technology wasn't considered economically viable," explains Glavinich "Today's advances in photovoltaic technology and manufacturing techniques, as well as integrating PV into building materials, are reducing the initial installed cost."

Electrical Contractors' Standard Strategy

The increasing use of photosensitive roofing and window materials is sparking turf wars among various building trades. Another goal of the Electrical Contracting Foundation is to help resolve this 'who installs' issue by defining installation procedures for PV systems.

The National Electrical Contractors Association (NECA) plans to draw on the results of the Foundation research to develop a **National Electrical Installation Standard (NEIS)** on photovoltaic systems. NEIS are a highly regarded family of ANSI-approved construction standards. The contractors' group is a founding member of the Electrical Contracting Foundation.

"The questions surrounding responsibility for installing photovoltaic systems are serious, and they're real," commented Brooke Stauffer, executive director for standards and safety at NECA. "But since these systems generate electricity, our members are definitely going to be involved. We think publishing an **National Electrical Installation Standard** to define industry best practices will be an important step in sorting out these issues."

"Higher photovoltaic system efficacy and rising fossil fuel prices are making the cost of PV-generated energy competitive with traditional power sources," comments the University of Kansas's Professor Glavinich. "Environmental issues, the movement toward 'green architecture,' and concerns about energy security are also giving PV a boost. Federal and

state governments, along with utilities, are offering building owners financial incentives to reduce their demand and energy use.”

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The ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING FOUNDATION (ELECTRI'21), established in 1988, is the primary research arm of the electrical construction industry. FOUNDATION research projects are intended to improve the productivity, professionalism, and competitiveness of electrical contractors. To learn more about the ELECTRICAL CONTRACTING FOUNDATION, please visit <http://www.electri21.org>.

The National Electrical Contractors Association, founded in 1901, is the leading representative of a segment of the construction market comprised of over 70,000 electrical contracting firms. To learn more about the industry and NECA's services, please visit <http://www.necanet.org>.

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