

Disaster Damage Determinations

The Initial Assessment and Agency Request inspection related to a declared disaster will be made at no cost. The Electrical Program may waive other fees related to the initial or subsequent safety inspections as directed in the Governor's Declaration of Disaster.

L&I's electrical inspectors and staff will support building officials, FEMA, other agencies, and utilities in rapidly assessing electrical damage in property, homes, and businesses by performing an Initial Assessment of potential damage to each electrical system involved in the declared disaster.

Response and Support

The local regional office has primary responsibility for all disaster response. Disaster response takes priority over normal inspection requests, except in the case of hospitals, penal institutions, and health care facilities. The local electrical supervisor has the primary responsibility to coordinate inspections to assess and determine possible electrical system damage due to the disaster.

Initial Assessment – Declared Disasters

An Initial Assessment will be made of all electrical services and power sources located in a declared disaster area to determine the extent of the damage to electrical systems. Initial Assessment does not necessarily require access to a structure, but does require an assessment and determination of each electrical system affected by the declared disaster.

The local Electrical Supervisor, in an affected area, will co-ordinate with the local utilities to determine which areas might first be able to have power restored and will assess those areas first.

An Initial Assessment will be made of each affected electrical system as quickly as possible.

The following guidelines will be used in assessing and recording a preliminary determination of potential electrical system damage:

- Recording of the Initial Assessment – Assessment will be recorded for each determination (i.e. property, service, or power source) as follows:
 - **None** – Electrical system undamaged (e.g. water into structure but below all electrical wiring and equipment with no damage incurred)).
 - **Minor** – Minor damage to the electrical system:
 - Damage does not require normal inspection (e.g. Structure was flooded, but the electrical system received minimal damage – only no permit required (Class A) items are affected such as receptacles, snap switches, etc.), or
 - Damage does not require repair (e.g. flooded underground wiring with no connections below the flood level, etc.).
 - **Major** – Floodwater has compromised the electrical system requiring replacement or repair (e.g. wiring, panels, furnace, water heater, appliances, etc., including Class B work).

- If the inspector determines that there is no damage:
 - A green assessment notice will be posted at the electrical meter, and
 - The local utility will be notified of the posting.
- If the inspector determines that there is a potential for “minor” or “major” damage and the damage may:
 - Be isolated (e.g. specific localized disconnection, etc.):
 - The damaged portion of the electrical system must be isolated and tagged to be disconnected,
 - A green assessment notice will be posted at the electrical meter, and
 - The local utility will be notified of the posting.
 - Not be isolated:
 - The damaged portion of the electrical system must be ordered disconnected from the utility and tagged to be disconnected,
 - A red assessment notice will be posted at the electrical meter, and
 - The local utility and owner will be notified of the posting.
- If the inspector determines that there is a potential for “minor” or “major” damage, the property’s electrical system must be inspected under an Agency Request or normal permit. If the owner or the owner’s representative is present at the time of the Initial Assessment, the inspector may initiate and perform the Agency Request at the same time as the Initial Assessment.
- If the required replacement or repairs require power to be disconnected by the utility, the utility and property owner will be notified of the determination. After the inspector has determined that the necessary repairs are made and the electrical system is safe, the utility will be notified.

Agency Request

In a declared disaster, L&I will accept requests for an Agency Request inspection from property owners (i.e. L&I will create an agency requested inspection request.) or other agencies.

When localized disasters occur that are not declared by the Governor, the L&I will accept a request for an agency requested safety inspection from another agency or utility.

These inspections will provide property owners with one no cost evaluation inspection including a list of the items needing repair or replacement before power may be restored. A list of items is not necessarily a list of corrections by code article, but is a list of items (e.g. service panel, furnace, basement wiring, etc.).

If the inspector determines that the damage is “minor”, the owner or the owner’s electrical contractor may make the repairs without further permit or inspection. The utility will be notified of the results of the Agency Request inspection.

If possible, the agency request and the Initial Assessment should be conducted at the same time.

The Agency Requested Inspection (Form F500-025-000) is available at:

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/FormPub/Detail.asp?DocID=2160>

Normal Electrical Permits

If replacement or repairs are necessary that require a normal permit and inspection, the owner or the owner's electrical contractor must obtain an appropriate normal electrical permit. The permit must be permitted and paid at the normal rate.

If power has been disconnected by the utility, after the inspector has determined that the necessary repairs are made and the electrical system is safe, the utility will be notified.

Flood Areas

WAC 296-46B-110(2) Electrical equipment and wiring that has been submerged or exposed to water must comply with the following:

- (a) All breakers, fuses, controllers, receptacles, lighting switches/dimmers, electric heaters, and any sealed device/equipment (e.g., relays, contractors, etc.) must be replaced.*
- (b) All other electrical equipment (e.g., wiring, breaker panel boards, disconnect switches, switchgear, motor control centers, boiler controls, HVAC/R equipment, electric motors, transformers, appliances, water heaters, and similar appliances) must be replaced or reconditioned by the original manufacturer, or by its approved representative.*

If exposed to flooding, an inspection must be made for:

- Any underground wiring, if any electrical connection was flooded,
- Any electrical equipment installed outdoors (e.g. mobile home pedestal, transformers, switches, receptacles, etc.), if any part of the equipment was flooded,
- Any structure with a basement area,
- Any structure where the maximum flood level reached the lower limit of the lower floor joists, or
- Any structure with a floor on grade.

Other Disasters

The local Electrical Supervisor, in an affected area, will co-ordinate with the Chief Electrical to develop a planned response to the disaster.

- An Initial Assessment will be made of all electrical services and power sources located in the damage area to determine the extent of the damage to electrical systems. The following guidelines must be used in making and recording a preliminary determination of damage.
 - Assessment will be recorded for each determination as follows:
 - None – Electrical system undamaged (e.g. no electrical system damage).
 - Minor – Damage to a minimal part of the electrical system requiring small repairs (e.g. service mast damage, etc.).
 - Major – Damage has compromised electrical equipment requiring major replacement or repair (e.g. panels, major system damage, furnace, water heater, appliances, etc.).