

NACIO 2008  
Montana  
Electrical Permits  
Government to Business

## Executive Summary

The Montana Electrical Permit service allows both homeowners and contractors to purchase their required electrical permits online. This unique service helps prevent errors, prevent fraud, and makes it fast and easy to purchase the necessary permits. In addition, the contractors can view and print their permits for a year after they have been issued. The service ties in with another mt.gov service, Electrical Permit Lookup, which allows anyone to look up a permit quickly and easily.

This unique service allows both homeowners and electrical contractors to purchase their required electrical permits online. The service uses a number of checks to prevent errors and fraud in the electrical permitting system. The service checks the jurisdiction, the electrical permit type, the location information, and the renewal information to make sure that a permit is issued correctly. All of the permit information is updated in the state's oracle database immediately and the required information is passed on to the inspector. The online service provides a fast and accurate way for Montanan's to purchase necessary electrical permits.

The Electrical Permit service forces the user to select the area in which they will be performing the electrical work. This helps eliminate incorrect permits that may be issued to areas that do not fall under the jurisdiction of DLI. Prior to the online service, this was a common mistake of applicants, resulting in incorrect permits, increased paperwork, and credits needed for customers.

Contractors are required to login using their license number and a PIN assigned by DLI. By requiring a login to the system, the license can be verified before the permit is issued. Only those with valid licenses are able to continue using the online service. In addition, only certain contractor license types are able to purchase commercial electrical permits. When the contractor logs in the system checks to be sure that the license is active and checks what type of license the contractor holds. The service then displays only the permits available to them for purchase. By limiting the permits to only those available to that customer, DLI eliminated the need to convey that information to the applicant via paper forms. The online process helps cut down on confusion and fraudulently acquired permits.

The other unique aspect of this service is the ability to automatically update the database and the inspectors with the important location information and driving instructions. Prior to the online service, a customer would fill out the paper form and submit it with their payment. Then a staff member from DLI would enter the information into the database. The permit holder was responsible for contacting the inspector and relaying any driving instructions so the inspector could find the location. With the online service the process takes just minutes and both the agency and the inspector have all the necessary information at the fingertips. This allows the inspection to be done quickly.

The Electrical Permit service is a great way for homeowners and electrical contractors to purchase necessary electrical permits quickly and easily. The service reduces errors and fraud and helps speed up the permitting and inspecting process.

## Description

Electrical Permit service allows both homeowners and contractors to purchase their required electrical permits online. This unique service helps prevent errors, prevent fraud, and makes it fast and easy to purchase the necessary permits. In addition, the contractors can view and print their permits for a year after they have been issued. The service ties in with another mt.gov service, Electrical Permit Lookup, which allows anyone to look up a permit quickly and easily.

The Electrical Permit service allows both homeowners and electrical contractors to purchase their permit online. The information is stored in the state's oracle database and the permit is issued immediately online for users to print.

Homeowners are not required to log into the service to purchase their permit but electrical contractors must enter their license number and a PIN provided by the Department of Labor and Industry (DLI). When contractors login, the system limits the available permits based on the type of license they hold. In addition, the login allows contractors to view their permits for one year. This eliminates the need to contact the agency when a permit is lost or an additional copy is needed.

The service prevents customers from purchasing permits for areas that are not under the jurisdiction of DLI. The customers are asked to select an area and if that area falls outside of the jurisdiction then the customer cannot continue with the online service. Customers are then asked to select the type of permit they need. The list of available permits depends on the type of user; homeowners cannot purchase commercial permits and only some electrical contractors are able to purchase commercial permits. This allows DLI to make sure that only correctly licensed electrical contractors are issued commercial permits. The system also allows permit renewals online if they are renewing a permit for the same location within the renewal period. Many permit types have follow up questions that must be answered, such as amperage or type of building.

Once the type of permit is chosen and additional information provided, the service asks for location and owner information. This includes the ability for users to enter driving instructions for the inspector. In a rural state, like Montana, this is a very useful piece of information for the inspectors when reviewing new construction. These driving instructions are stored in the database and sent to the inspector on a mobile device.

After all the necessary information is collected, the customer pays the required fees and they are presented with the electrical permit. This permit is printable and, for contractors, it is available for one year.

This service ties into a search service for electrical permits that allows anyone to search for a permit and print a copy. The electrical permit search service also allows the power companies and the inspectors to view any necessary permits without having to request a copy from DLI.

## Significance

This unique service allows both homeowners and electrical contractors to purchase their required electrical permits online. The service uses a number of checks to prevent errors

and fraud in the electrical permitting system. The service checks the jurisdiction, the electrical permit type, the location information, and the renewal information to make sure that a permit is issued correctly. All of the permit information is updated in the state's oracle database immediately and the required information is passed on to the inspector. The online service provides a fast and accurate way for Montanan's to purchase necessary electrical permits.

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Mt.gov assessed the Department of Labor and Industry's Electrical Permit service without a formal return on investment method and focused on the cost benefit to the homeowners, contractors, and the agency, and the value the service added.

There is a cost benefit to the homeowners and contractors because they no longer have to bring paperwork to the office or mail in the form with a check. The homeowners and contractors save time because they don't have to wait for the permit to be issued before they can complete their electrical work. They can also now purchase their permit at the last minute, which was not possible under the manual process. The Department of Labor and Industry has seen a cost benefit from the service in their staff time because they don't have to process as many paper forms, especially in the busy summer months. As the adoption rate of the online service increases the agency will be able to cut back the

amount of staff time it takes to complete the data entry and check processing for the electrical permits, saving even more time and money.

As with all of the services built by mt.gov, there is a value added benefit for the customers and for the agency. The Electrical Permit service is easy to use, more efficient than the paper process, and is a more accurate way to collect the information for the permit. Contractors are able to use the system to track their permits and print copies. The Department of Labor and Industry is able to spend less time issuing paper permits and because the information is entered online, the information is more accurate. By not paying development costs for the service, the Department of Labor and Industry saved over \$41,000.00. Maintenance and enhancements to the service are also provided at no charge. Maintenance cost savings for the state is currently more than \$7,000.

**Benefit of Service:**

Mt.gov projected that in its first year the Electrical Permit service would have between a 5% and 10% adoption rate. The Electrical Permits service was launched in January 2007. The adoption rate for the first year was over 50%. In 2008, the adoption has increased to 74% with over 78% of the permits issued to electrical contractors using the online service.

The Electrical Permit service was developed and maintained without the use of tax dollars or a state general fund appropriation. This is possible through a public/private alliance between the state of Montana and mt.gov.

