

Good morning and thank you for the opportunity to speak on this important issue. My name is Chip Eastman. I was born and raised in Maine. I started the electrical apprenticeship with the IBEW local 567 after getting out of the Army in 2000.

I completed the 5yr apprenticeship in 2005 and two years later started my own Union electrical company. I ran that business for 7 yrs. before selling it off and going to work for other companies. I started a new nonunion electrical company in 2018 and now employ nine Electricians, and one full time office manager.

I've worked with and employed union trained electricians and electricians trained through the Technical colleges in the State of Maine. Both systems produce high quality electricians that are an asset to this state. I've worked on large commercial projects, industrial projects and residential projects such as the Walmart distribution center in Lewiston, Shaw's supermarket in Lewiston and Freeport, Sappi Paper, and dozens of houses and apartment buildings.

I strongly believe that the law that only allows one helper electrician per journeyman electrician should be changed. I believe a journeyman or master electrician is capable of leading, training, and mentoring up to three helpers at a time. A fully licensed electrician can effectively lay out a job and assign each worker a simple task to complete that will be inspected by the licensed electrician before moving on.

A simple scenario could go like this: The journeyman has three helpers bring materials into a home while they mark out where the switch and receptacle boxes will go. They then assign two helpers to drill holes for wires to be pulled through while one helper nails on boxes. They then instruct each helper to pull a wire from box to box and properly secure them along the way.

They then have two helpers pull “home runs” from one box on each circuit to the main electrical panel. They show the other helper how to make up the boxes and tuck the wires in until its time to install the devices. The journeyman or master is on site at all times and inspecting the work that is being done as it is going on. They are also teaching the helpers at the same time. This scenario works in the residential and commercial electrical field.

I currently have one helper taking classes online through Novel Engineering while he is working. It would be easy to have two more helpers doing the same thing. This would help bring more young people into the trades letting them earn their way into a good career. Go to a code update class and the average age in the room is in the 50's. We have a shortage of skilled tradespeople in this state. Allowing us to have three helpers to every licensed electrician will help us correct this problem and ensure there's enough skilled Mainers to take care of the construction and maintenance needs in our state.

It would help the small electrical companies meet the demand of their customers while keeping the cost down. Allowing more helpers would let us give young people a chance to see how they do and allow them to see if they like the trades. Ultra Electric and all other trade companies I know are constantly telling customers they will have to wait for two to three months before we can help them. Allowing a more helpers per licensed electrician would allow us to send a Journeyman to an emergency call that only requires one worker while the other journeyman instructs and leads three helpers until the second journeyman returns. This is an issue that arises quite often.

Please consider that the US Army infantry has one Sargent lead three lower enlisted on every fire team. They are responsible to train, mentor and lead the young Americans into battle. The conditions and stress they are under are far more complex and challenging than anything on

I believe if one NCO can lead three lower enlisted soldiers into battle than a journeyman can effectively lead three helpers on a construction site.

Thank you for your time. Please help us help our fellow Mainers.