

The New Mechanical License Proposal: A Good Idea But!

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How many of you have heard about the new proposal for a Mechanical Licensing Law being proposed by a "small group of industry members" to combine licensing for plumbers, gas fitters and oil burner techs (yes another license), all of who are under the regulative authority of the Department of Safety into one mechanical licensing board or entity?

According to the NHPMC Pipeline Newsletter this proposal came about because of two bills introduced in the NH legislature this session, HB 517 calling for the repeal of the gas fitters law and HB 394 which would have required licensing for oil burner technicians. Both of these bills are dead for this session but will be back next year.

They claim since the three licenses are all under the DOS authority, combining them could be done more efficiently and at less cost to licensees than it has in the past and that anticipated fees for those who carry both a master plumber and gas fitter's license could be reduced by 50%.

Up to this point I like the proposal but there are a few points of concern that I feel need to be addressed.

The way the bill is written right now makes it so that only one of the four organizations who can potentially put a fuel gas fitter on the board can designate a "fuel gas fitter only" to serve on the board. The other three opportunities for a gas fitter to serve must meet the following requirement "One licensed master or journeyman plumber who is a licensed fuel gas fitter". Before anyone says I don't know what I am talking about please go and read this yourself on the [Revised April 18, 2011 draft](#) posted on the New Hampshire Plumbers Mechanical Contractors website (Page 6, section e: 5, 6, 7).

When I expressed my concerns with the dual qualifications required to serve from these three organizations a person very much in-the-know explained it this way, "The 3 members (of a nine person board) that come from the NHPMC, PFGHVAC and the Steam Fitters Union would all be required to have both licenses so as to keep at least 3 licensed plumbers and 3 licensed gas fitters on this 9 person board. If we made it optional with either license we could easily have no plumbers or no gas fitters from these organizations. Additionally pgane would be providing a gas fitter too. How is this unfair?"

While I understand his logic I still question the fact that gas fitters who do not have a plumbers license are not eligible to serve on this board unless they are ppane members.

Why not change the language to three gas fitters only and three plumbers? Board members aren't paid so what harm would it do and this would allow gas fitters only to serve if they desired and could get appointed.

Another concern for me is the fact that although the board will only have power to recommend policy to the Department of Safety they will have full control of disciplining technicians.

I think there are some shining examples of why the discipline should stay with the DOS if you pay attention to the buzz in the industry. I know many think it is fairer for the board to have the discipline control but the DOS has no skin in the game like we tradesman do and are more inclined to look at issues from a public safety standpoint only.

In response to an initial query about the trade organization board member requirements the same in-the-know person I mentioned earlier wanted to make clear to me "this is not an attempt to expand licensing to other trades other than oil, but only if the oil industry wants in" but then just 3 sentences later said, "this is a progressive attempt to build a licensing framework that can later be expanded to include many facets of the mechanical trades".

When asked which one it was he replied, "I will stand by my statement that this is not an attempt to expand licensing, but the bill is an excellent platform to do so in the future when the legislature feels it is necessary. I can think of many facets of our trade that will be licensed in the future-but not today, so it is both". I certainly appreciate the honesty here.

The wording of the bill is still in the draft form and changes will be forth coming. Please click on the link below and read the proposal and voice your opinion about this proposal to those proposing it and to the DOS whether you are for it or against it. Feedback is very important at this time.

The gas fitter only side of this industry is made up of a lot of independent minded people who enjoyed its wild west like lack of regulation but those days are quickly coming to an end and in these days of everyone wanting to be in on the rules and regulation writing business you either have your representative or your left out.

Please click on [the link](#) and read the proposed bill as it is drafted at this time.

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