

Clarification about electrical licensing requirements when replacing HVAC equipment and water heaters

Our agency has received questions about electrical licensing requirements when replacing HVAC equipment and electric water heaters covered in Minnesota Statutes 326B.38 subd. 4, which includes:

326B.38 MANUFACTURED ELECTRICAL PARTS; EXEMPTION. *Subd. 4. Other equipment.*

Planning, laying out, alteration, replacement, or repair of heating, ventilating, air conditioning, or refrigeration equipment (including associated devices, controls, and wiring) are not covered by sections 326B.31 to 326B.399 under specific conditions.

Below are frequently asked questions and answers about electrical licensing requirements for HVAC and plumbing contractors when replacing HVAC equipment and electric water heaters.

Registered HVAC contractor - furnace and air conditioner replacement

Q) Does a HVAC contractor have to hire a licensed electrical contractor to replace a furnace or air conditioner?

A) No. An HVAC contractor can replace a furnace or air conditioner without hiring a licensed electrician in Minn. Stat. 326B.38, subd. 4, which allows them to disconnect and reconnect the existing branch circuit connection without modifying the circuit if the following conditions are met:

Business requirement

- The work must be performed by an employee of an HVAC contractor.

Employee requirement

- The employee received a certificate of completion from an approved HVAC apprenticeship program in Minnesota*, or
- The employee holds any class of personal license issued by the Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry (DLI).

*No DLI-approved HVAC apprenticeship program exists at this time.

A) Yes. If the above conditions are not met, or if any modification to the existing branch circuit is needed, a licensed electrical contractor must be hired.

Licensed plumber or HVAC contractor - electric water heater replacement

Q) Does a licensed plumber or HVAC contractor have to hire a licensed electrical contractor to replace an electric water heater?

A) Yes. A licensed electrical contractor must be hired to replace the electric water heater. There is no exemption in Minn. Stat. 326B.38, subd. 4, for electric water heaters. State law defines replacing an electric water heater as “electrical work” and requires electrical licensing and inspections (Minn. Stats. 326B.33 and 326B.36).