

“AS I SEE IT”
The National Electrical Code
John Tracy, 3rd Ward City Council

Passing any new Code is a gamble because unless you are given time to read it from cover to cover, you never know what is in store. But when the City of Wellington announced it wanted to pass the 2008 National Electrical Code with an amendment restricting homeowners from performing their own work, I could find no one outside the Council Chambers who was in favor of it.

Prior to the February 2 passage of the new Ordinance, homeowners were allowed to make any changes or additions to their home electrical system they wanted. The new Ordinance will require them, on permit-required work, to pay a fee and pass a test administered at City Hall before a permit will be issued.

In my opinion, there are three different groups of people in Wellington. The first group wouldn't attempt to perform their own work and would call an electrician regardless of how small the task. The second group will perform their own work, without permit or inspection, regardless of any rules or regulations in place. Finally, the last group are those people who, in good faith obtain a City permit, perform the work, then call for an inspection when finished. I believe the new testing requirements will compel many of those in the last group to now perform the work themselves anyway, without permit or inspection.

An instance was cited in which a homeowner obtained a permit, and when the inspection was performed, 25 violations were found. But the fact is that those violations were found during the inspection process and were safely corrected. If that same homeowner now chooses to perform the work without a permit or inspection, those 25 violations will exist without the City's knowledge. Thus, it is highly likely that the passage of this new Ordinance will make Wellington "less safe".

One other aspect, and possibly the most important, I have yet to find one instance in the last six years in which the City paid anyone's home mortgage, house insurance, or property taxes. Why then, do we feel we have the right to come into someone's home and tell them what they can and cannot do?

Ensuring the safety of the general public is one thing; if someone's actions threaten a neighbor or a passerby, there needs to be laws to protect the innocent bystander. But when government feels it has the right to protect you from yourself, there is no stopping point.

What's next? Will Government recognize the dangers of the gasoline powered lawnmower and require citizens to pass a safety test before allowing them to mow their own yard? And if they fail the test, will they be required to have their grass cut by

professional lawn care companies?

How about the dangers of the natural gas cooking stove? Doesn't government realize how many cooking fires there are? Perhaps we should make people take a test to ensure they can safely control the flame in a cooking stove...lest they are forced to dine out every night.

I better stop there...I might be planting some ideas.

There is such a thing as TOO MUCH GOVERNMENT, and it has arrived in Wellington.