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# ESOURCE NEWSLETTER

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## Employee-in-Charge Requirements

### EICs have an important responsibility that requires a plan for success

When was the last time your organization discussed or highlighted the importance of the employee in charge (EIC)? The EIC has the responsibility to ensure job site success, so it is one of the most important job functions within your company. And because electric utility workers perform jobs with extremely high-risk hazards that require successful planning and execution, organizations must assess whether they have equipped employees with the knowledge, skills, tools, responsibility and accountability required to successfully implement EIC duties.

The electric power industry continues to experience serious injuries and fatalities (SIFs). Many times, organizations plan work as imagined, but the actual work that must be performed can turn out to be very different. Many SIFs can be linked to weak or no job site planning based on actual work at the job site.

Some questions that you may need to ask within your organization include:

- Do all operational employees know how to implement EIC duties?
- How often do you review the importance of ensuring each job site has an EIC?
- What type of training do you provide?
- Do you feel your team has an opportunity to improve?



## NESC and OSHA

Although it should be a no-brainer to have someone on each job site who is responsible and accountable for making decisions, OSHA and consensus standards make it a point to require an EIC on all job sites. The National Electrical Safety Code C2-2023 states that a “designated person shall be in charge of the operation of the equipment and lines and shall be responsible for their safe operation.” Further, it states that if “more than one person is engaged in work on or in the vicinity of the same equipment or line, one person shall be designated as in charge of the work to be performed. Where there are separate work locations, one person may be designated at each location.”

OSHA electric power standards (see 29 CFR 1910.269 and 1926 Subpart V) describe EIC duties throughout the preamble and the standards. Job briefings and de-energizing lines and equipment for employee protection are two major areas of EIC responsibility. Both areas focus heavily on planning and execution, so it is important to ensure an understanding of these rule requirements.

OSHA 1910.269(c) and 1926.952, both titled “Job briefing,” require the employer to ensure that the EIC conducts a job briefing with the employees involved before they start each job. A job briefing sets the stage for effective job planning and execution, so, an effective briefing process helps ensure EIC success. The EIC must understand work and task completion requirements along with hazard identification and development of effective controls. This is an extremely important area as it targets the planning that must be successful for the work to be successful.

### **EIC Qualification**

Many organizations define the EIC as the supervisor or the crew leader, but this may not be effective when you consider that some job sites may have neither. If a job site does not have an assigned supervisor or crew leader, an EIC may be at the same skill level as others on the site. It can be challenging for employees to adhere to EIC rules when they all have the same job classification, particularly if their organization is not regularly discussing the requirement to assign one qualified employee to oversee each job.

Additionally, organizations must understand that having a supervisor or crew leader on a job site does not mean the EIC duties are being performed. Some organizations provide frontline leadership training, and others promote employees to these positions without providing any leadership training.

The EIC position is a leadership role, and without training and an understanding of required expectations, success likely will not occur.

Just because an employee is a good worker does not mean they have the skills necessary to successfully plan jobs, make decisions and lead employees.

At a minimum, EICs must communicate effectively; develop job site plans; know the required rules and ensure compliance; assure work is performed correctly and safely; and ensure everyone is working as a team.

For these duties to be executed properly, an organization must have an effective process to train and qualify EICs, as well as a method to assess the effectiveness of the process.

Qualification should be based on demonstrated proficiency. An EIC process should also align with other apprenticeship programs within your organization because successful leaders learn and grow continually, much like a journeyman lineman and others do throughout their career. EICs have an important responsibility, and it requires a plan for success. The plan must go far beyond appointing someone responsible without equipping them with the necessary skills. Organizations are obligated to develop EICs who are knowledgeable and understand their role in effective job planning, decision making, leading others and controlling job sites. ***IMEA’s Supervisor Safety and Introduction to Supervision Workshops are designed to train and qualify EICs for your organization.***

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