



*Air Conditioning Contractors of America
New England Region*



*Associated Builders and Contractors
Massachusetts Chapter*

Industry Groups Support Fair and Equitable Sheet Metal Licensing

Leading construction industry trade groups support the new law (Chapter 232 of 2008) licensing the sheet metal trade in Massachusetts as a means to enhance safety and professionalism, and are actively working to ensure that the law is administered in a manner that is fair and equitable to all sectors within the industry.

The law is broad in scope and reach. It defines sheet metal work to include commercial as well as residential applications. It calls for licensing workers and contractors, and sets requirements for each. The law establishes grandfathering provisions for those currently in the trade. It establishes the Board of Examiners of Sheet Metal Workers and gives the Board broad authority to develop regulations and policies.

Governor Patrick's appointees to the new Board include four representatives from the sheet metal trade, all from the unionized segment of the industry. The Governor's appointee as the representative of the public is from a related trade, also from the unionized sector. The unionized segment operates under the terms and conditions of collective bargaining agreements that affect various work procedures, while the majority of the industry does not.

Representing a wide cross section of contractors that perform commercial as well as residential sheet metal work, we believe the law must reflect the true make-up of the industry. According to 2008 data from unionstats.com, 80 percent of Massachusetts' construction workers are not affiliated with unions and are not party to collective bargaining agreements. In the residential construction industry, union affiliation is extremely rare.

While it is important that the unions be represented in the process, it is at least as important that the majority of the industry be heard and considered as well. Unfortunately, the regulations given initial approval by the Board do not reflect what is in the best interest of the majority of the industry and consumers. For example, the regulations mandate three to one journey person to apprentice ratios for commercial and large residential work, and impose excessive training requirements of five years and 750 classroom hours. These requirements exceed those of the skilled electrical and plumbing trades, and will hinder our ability to attract young people to the industry.

In raising standards through licensing, we must be careful not to go too far. The combination of restrictive apprentice policies and extreme training requirements could be devastating to the industry's future.

We believe we have a profound opportunity to move the sheet metal trade forward to the benefit of our current and future workers and contractors. We, must, however, draw upon the considerable talent and experience from all corners of our industry. Therefore, we are committed to ensuring that the interests of the full industry are considered in order to effectuate the best possible outcome from the new sheet metal licensing law.