

How Qualified Is Your Electrician?

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The electrical portion of a swimming pool project is always performed by a qualified, licensed electrician, but qualified is a broad term. With the NEC changing every three years and the pool section 680 growing by leaps and bounds, it is increasingly necessary for electricians to specialize in swimming pool wiring. The days of running a single bond wire and hooking up a pump and a light are gone. More than 16 pages of the 2008 NEC are dedicated to swimming pools and each county interprets it with their own special twist. That doesn't even touch on the vast array of controllers and how each needs to be installed.

A good swimming pool electrician needs to understand how the plumbing works, when a particular pump or valve needs to be on or off, and when a chlorinator should be on or when on is a hazard. What is a bonding grid? What the heck is an equipotential bond? What is the difference between bonded and grounded? It's a two speed pump?! How does it know? Isn't a light niche a French pastry? The list goes on. The technology introduced at pool shows is amazing and somewhat overwhelming.

With that being said, how much less stress would a truly qualified electrician be to your business. One that truly understands the end result you are trying to deliver to your customer. I'm not suggesting that you need to find someone new; I am suggesting that you meet with your electrician on a more complicated job and walk him through the plumbing and chemical controls. Let him know what dangers there are from chlorinating a spa at levels intended for the pool. Let him show you why you have to have clearance in front of the panel or why the pump can't be six inches from the wall. Make sure he is attending the classes offered by the manufacturers of the controls you are using. He needs to have an understanding of the new high efficiency products that are available. You should be able to call on him to tell you what automation system you need based on the equipment you have on the pool.

The work that your electrician is doing on your project is critical to the correct operation of a well designed pool that bares your name in the end and for years to come. It is also critical to the safety of the project. Your plumbers may know how to run pipe or bond a pool but is your insurance company going to agree if something should ever happen? Make sure your electrician really is qualified.