



MARCH 2009 NEWSLETTER

THE NATIONS LEADER IN ESTIMATING SOFTWARE

Canadian Attendees Travel 1,800 Miles for Conference

McCormick Newsletter

Construction Links

[Stimulus Package \(30 links for more info\)](#)

[Obama set to turn energy sector on its head](#)

[New Site for ABC's Magazine](#)

[Architecture in 'Second Life'](#)

Electrical

[Free Webinar on Grounding & Bonding](#)

[IEC & OSHA Renew Alliance](#)

Copper Market Special Report (2 parts):

[Market Gyration
\\$1.50 Per Pound?](#)

[LightNow Lighting Site Converts To Blog](#)

[PV Math \(Photovoltaics & the NEC\) –
from inspectors' magazine.](#)

Green

[NECA-IBEW Training Chief On Green
Jobs](#)

[ABC Launches Green Website](#)

[TED Magazine's New 'GreenRoom' Site](#)

[Wind Energy Maintenance Market](#)

[Promoting LEED Projects The Right Way](#)

Training Dates



Upcoming Standard Training Classes in ARIZONA are set for Feb. 18-20, and March 11-13, April 1-3.

SPECIAL pre-conference training events will be held April 20-21 in Scottsdale, AZ --



Eric Karn & Rick Butler

Just five years after they founded Electri-Tech Services, Inc., of Kitchener, ON (Canada), owners Rick Butler & Eric Karn will next month make their third trip to a McCormick Systems User's Conference. It's not exactly a round-the-world journey, but it is 1,835 miles as the crow flies.

"We like the conference," explains Eric Karn. "We like the idea that they [the McCormick staffers] listen to the people who are using their products. We get the feeling that your voice is important.

"Plus, there is a 'family feel.' You get to meet the tech support people and the programmers. All of the staff members are friendly. You feel like you're part of the McCormick group."

Electri-Tech began life in January 2004 as a two-man company. But Butler and Karn had worked together for 17 years, in the employ of another contractor. They'd learned electrical estimating together (from a teacher who favored McCormick's software).

Today, the company now has more than 20 employees, including 15 journeymen and three apprentices. But it has had as many as 30 people at work when it pursued larger projects. The Electri-Tech service area extends to a three-city area: Kitchener, Toronto, and Mississauga.

"We're tied into several life insurance companies, as their electrical contractor, of choice" Eric says. "We do all kinds of commercial service and maintenance work, including energy-efficient lighting projects. We also do petrochemical and industrial work at some of the bigger facilities here locally."



both Standard & **Advanced** classes!!!

Standard training classes set for our Chandler, AZ offices are scheduled for April 1-3 May 6-, and May 13-15.

Upcoming classes in **Columbia, MD**, include April 1-3 and June 10-12 (both of them Standard classes). The next **Advanced** class in MD will be held Aug. 12-14.

We've added **2009 training dates** [training dates](#)

Training can be "suit-cased" to your facility. We can tailor our training to your needs. Ask us about customized training at your site!

Call to register for any of the above classes, including those in Maryland: 1-800-444-4890.

We've posted training dates, directions to our training facilities, and registration forms on our Web page. Click the "Education" button on our home page, or go directly to this link: [Education](#)

Growing by plan

"We saw a need in our market for a service contractor in the electrical industry," Eric remembers. "Commercial and industrial customers needed a contractor who could respond quickly, something more than a bid/quote guy."

"Electri-Tech wants to be the contractor of choice when a customer needs service immediately either due to breakdowns or last minute emergencies. Their motto is "taking pride in customer service"

In addition to that goal, Electri-Tech's founders always intended to bid construction and renovation work as well. For the first two years, Rick and Eric did their estimating on paper. In 2006, they purchased a McCormick WIN 3000 system, and now they've moved on up to the Win6000.

"We like the McCormick software because, once you get the basic estimate in there, you can adapt and adjust. You can put in alternates to get different pricing. You can change a few things as the addendums come out," Karn says. "And the new Canadian beta version ties in well with the Tra-Ser Canada database."

"Basically, with McCormick, we're able to do more quoting. As we've grown and become able to take on bigger projects, we've used the software to quote them faster. We were a small shop for the first years, but now we finally grew up."

"Plus, these days, we have to do more quoting and providing more formal estimates. It seems that all of the customers have seen their budgets tightened up."

Eric and Rick have also put "hot keys" to work to speed their estimating. "It's pretty easy to use, once you've taken their training," he adds.

Improving the product

As noted in a press release reproduced below, McCormick Systems has recently introduced a Canadian database. Electri-Tech is one of the companies that got early versions of the new product.

"I'm test-driving that database, and it's working pretty well," Eric says. "I like to test things and experiment. The interface works very very well. They obviously put in a lot of time to get the UPC (DCI) codes to match up to what we have in Canada."

"Bottom line: I'm pleased with the way the Canadian database has been working."

Getting companies like Electri-Tech (on both sides of the border) to test-drive new software is important to McCormick. With a small office staff (Eric's wife, Lise, is the office manager), Eric and Rick do not employ an IT manager! By necessity, then, the Electri-Tech partners are the IT people (!) as well as estimators – deeply involved when it comes to using and maintaining their electrical estimating software.

Website is coming

While the company has owned www.electri-tech.com for a while now, the first material posted to the website will get up there as the partners find time for it, hopefully this April. Like many smaller companies, Electri-Tech doesn't have an "IT department."

As a result, the company leans on McCormick when it needs help. "We don't necessarily call McCormick all the time, but when we do, I find they get back to you very quickly," Eric says. "Whoever calls back, they know us and are very familiar with our situation."

Eric adds that he sees the same thing in the User's Conference.

"You get to see the products, and thanks to the computer lab they have on-site, you get exposure to the products. I also think we benefit from listening to the other attendees who are there, learning from their experience."



Job backups should only be done at the job screen.

Full system backups can only be performed with the maintenance utility.

With system backups you are better off checking everything all the time. This will allow you to restore everything should something go wrong.

We had a user recently with a corrupted parts database, out of the 10 backups they had, only 1 had the parts database in it. without his custom items and assemblies the jobs he faithfully backed up would have been useless.

[Visit the McCormick Website](#)
[Unsubscribe](#)

“All together, it’s a great experience. It’s a very ‘hands-on’ type of event. And you get to meet people who are part of the McCormick family . . . just like we are....distant Canadian cousins..... Eh!”

What The Media is saying:

McCormick Software Modified To Serve Canadian Contractors

To better serve Canadian electrical contractors, McCormick Systems has made major modifications to its electrical estimating software. An alternative version now includes a database that accommodates those working with Imperial, Metric or a mixture of both.

But there’s more involved than the simple conversion of feet to meters. McCormick’s estimating software for those working in Canada now also includes:

- Modification of product codes to accommodate Canadian manufacturers;
- Updating of prices from Canadian suppliers is part of the software;
- Specific items unique to Canadian electrical work are included;
- Assemblies specific to work typically found in Canada are in the database.
- Sample jobs that represent work Canadian electrical contractors do are now part of the system.

“We now can better accommodate the needs of Canadian electrical contractors,” said Todd McCormick, president of McCormick Systems. “We offer the flexibility of having per foot prices along side per meter prices.

“As an example: You might be in a situation in which your wire is priced by the meter, and your conduit is by the foot! That’s not a problem for our system. In addition to all the modifications to our software, the key for them may be that the electrical estimator can now do take-offs in meters instead of feet, the system with which they are more comfortable.”

About McCormick Systems

Privately owned McCormick Systems (Chandler, AZ) is the nation’s leader in software used for electrical and ABS(Automated Building Systems (voice,data,video)) estimating and project management. The company’s products enable contractors to quickly produce consistent, profitable estimates for electrical and voice-data-video work, and more.

More information: www.mccormicksys.com or 800-444-4890.

April 22-25 User’s

Conference: Your Quick-Ref Schedule

See the [January newsletter](#) for details we have thus far on our annual McCormick Systems User's Conference, to be held April 22-26 at the Embassy Suites in Scottsdale, AZ. For your quick reference, here's what we've got planned:

SCHEDULE AT A GLANCE		
Date	Event	Time
Mon., 4/20	Standard & Advanced Windows Training (separate classes)	7am-4pm
Tues., 4/21	Day 2, Standard & Advanced Windows Training Classes	7am-4pm
Wed. 4/22	McCormick Masters Golf Tournament	tee off: 7:30am
Wed., 4/22	Welcoming Reception	7pm-9pm
Thur. 4/23	Registration	
Thur. 4/23	Conference Sessions	7:30am - 5pm
Thur. 4/23	Computer Lab	9am - 5pm
Fri. 4/19	Conference Sessions	7am - 4pm
Fri. 4/20	Computer Lab	7am - 3:00p
Fri. 4/20	Dinner	6pm
Sat. 4/21	Computer Lab	7:30am - 12

Ready to reserve your spot(s)? Call us (800 444 4890) for more information or to register!

PERSPECTIVE

February-March items from www.eleblog.com

How Many Housing Starts?

(posted 3/2/09) One of the things that annoys me about economists is the tendency to report things SAAR -- at a "seasonally adjusted annual rate." In other words:

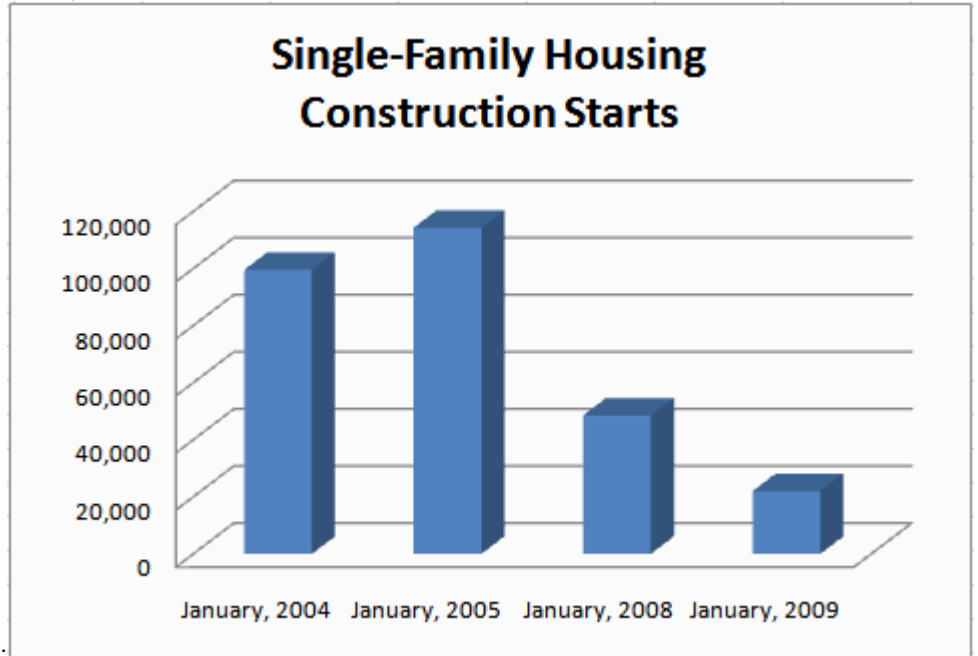
- There are real numbers (for housing starts in the month of January, for example).
- What's reported, however, is the January starts at an annualized basis (SAAR).
- You can't know anything about the adjustments. That's in footnotes somewhere. Are they accurate? How often are they changed? Do the seasonal adjustments reflect what goes on during a Depression? NO ONE KNOWS.
- Finally, people get confused. The other day I saw a Bloomberg TV broadcaster report that U.S. GDP fell 6% in Q4. That's not what happened. U.S. GDP fell 1.5% or thereabouts in Q4, according to the most recent estimate. ANNUALIZED, it fell at a 6% rate. It would take longer to read the footnotes, adjustments, and such that go with this number than to just fling the number out itself.

[For example, the first estimate of Q4 GDP had it down 3.8%, SAAR. And: There is one more "final" estimate to come, in about a month]

OK, having spilled all of that officious bile, here's my point today: I keep hearing and reading that housing starts are DOWN to a certain number. But that doesn't tell me anything. Construction started on X number of REAL (not seasonally adjusted) houses in the U.S. in January.

How many?

Here's the answer, with some historical



perspective:

January, 2009 -- construction started on 22,000 single-family houses (a # probably subject to some future revision).

January, 2008 -- construction started on 48,500 single-family houses.

AND HERE'S THE KICKER --

January, 2005 -- construction started on 114,300 single-family houses.

January, 2004 -- construction started on 99,500 single-family houses

Bottom line: single-family housing construction starts in January 2009 were 19.2% of what it was in January, 2005.

Smart Grid Stuff

(posted 2/13/09) I wrote a 3-part series on The Smart Grid for TED magazine's website. Electrical distributors (TED's readers) are, sooner or later, going to be hip-deep in Smart Grid stuff. It's likely that everyone else in the electrical industry will be, too.



Today's DUMB grid (graphic from the GridWise Alliance, www.gridwise.org).



Today's SMART grid (graphic from the GridWise Alliance, www.gridwise.org).

Part 1 -- [Intro to the topic](#).

Part 2 -- I did a really good job [on this piece](#). There are links to places to find a lot more info, 2 graphics, and a really neat sentence (which I DID NOT create)The quote is that the national grid (the transmission-and-distribution system):

is the largest machine on earth and a cornerstone of America's prosperity, national security, public health and safety.

Part 3 -- A bit more opinionated. I've followed The Smart Grid for two years. It seems that [everything that ails our national electrical system can be solved](#) (according to various proponents) by the Smart Grid. I don't think so!

Everything you need to know about The Smart Grid IS NOT HERE. There are 4,500 words all told, or thereabouts, in the three pieces. But if you trouble to wade through all three (and follow some of the links in Part 2) . . . you'll come out with an introduction to the subject, a basic understanding of what folks are talking about, and a spin (from me) on what's actually going on.

Laughter



(posted 2/5/09) Yes, I know this is the EleBlog, but I couldn't resist this item. According to something I read (in Consumer Reports on Health, a newsletter), under the headline *Heart benefits of a hearty laugh*, I read the following facts:

"Laughing boosts energy expenditure by 10% to 20%, according to Vanderbilt University researchers."

So laughing adds up. If you laugh 15 minutes more a day, you could burn 40 more calories a day. So just laughing heartily, the Vandy researchers say, 15 minutes each day could help you to lose 4 more pounds a year!!!

"In a small one-year study of heart-attack patients, those who watched comedies for 30 minutes a day were less likely to suffer a 2nd heart attack than those who did not watch funny videos."

"While 4-year-olds laugh about every 4 minutes, adults do it about once an hour."

149 W Boston
Chandler, AZ 85225
Toll Free (800) 444-4890
Phone (480) 831-8914 Fax (480) 820-2422