
BBS MEMO

Ohio Board of Building Standards

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ELECTRICAL SERVICE UTILITIES AND THE CERTIFIED BUILDING DEPARTMENT

The Board of Building Standards frequently receives questions about where the separation between building department authority and the electrical utility occurs. The simplest answer is to identify the point in the wiring system where the utility wiring ends and the premises wiring begins, or the "service point". This determination is critical because it is the point at which the OBBC (and by reference, NFPA-70) controls. Once jurisdiction of the building department is established, plans for the installation are required to be submitted for review for approval by the certified building official and inspection by an Electrical Safety Inspector.

The serving utility usually specifies the location of the "service point" as described in the utilities' PUCO approved tariffs. (Tariffs are authorizations from the Public Utilities Commission to provide specific services for the public in specific ways and in specific areas.) Conductors on the utility side of the "service point" are not covered by the OBBC/NEC, but those conductors on the premises side are covered. The exact location of the "service point" varies from utility to utility, and in some cases, from occupancy to occupancy pursuant to the utility's tariff. The "service point" could be at a weatherhead, at a meter base, at a transformer on a transformer pad, at an intermediate terminal box, or at the base of a pole, etc. Service laterals (underground systems) may be run from poles or from transformers, with or without terminal boxes, provided they begin at the designated "service point".

For example, a typical structure has an over-head service drop from a utility pole. If the utility specifies the "service point" is at the point of attachment of the service drop to the structure, then the service drop conductors are not considered service conductors in this case. This is because the service drop is not on the premises wiring side of the "service point". Alternately, if the "service point" is specified as "at the pole" by the utility, then the service drop conductors would be considered service conductors, and the NEC would apply to the service drop. If the utility has specified that the "service point" is at a utility manhole, then the service conductors from the underground distribution system originate at the utility manhole and the NEC would apply from that point. Generally any conductor on the serving utility side of the "service point" is not covered by the OBBC/NEC.

In summary, since the location of the "service point" is determined by the utility in its approved tariff, the service-drop conductors and the service lateral conductors may or may not be part of the service as covered by the OBBC/NEC. In order for these types of conductors to be covered, they must be physically located on the premises wiring side of the "service point". If these conductors are located on the utility side of the "service point", they are not covered in the definition of service conductors and therefore, are not covered by the OBBC/NEC. Those parts of the system not within the scope of the OBBC/NEC need no plan approval or subsequent inspections. Those parts of the system within the scope of the OBBC/NEC must obtain plan approval and subsequent inspections.