



ROBB KAHL
STATE REPRESENTATIVE

December 9, 2015

TO: Members of the Assembly Committee on Energy and Utilities
FR: Representative Robb Kahl
RE: Assembly Bill 560 related to disconnection devices for distributed generation facilities

Chairman Kuglitsch and members,

Thank you for holding this hearing on Assembly Bill 560 today.

Earlier this year I had an opportunity to attend a meeting of Utility Workers and I learned about steps that had been taken in Iowa to further protect utility workers, first responders and the general public through passage of legislation requiring placement of external disconnect switches and notification to the utility when a distributed generation device had been installed. It was suggested that similar legislation should be pursued in Wisconsin.

DG is an area where research and development never ceases. Manufacturers are designing more efficient wind turbines which can be placed not only in relatively isolated rural settings, but within urban centers. Solar development continues and improvements in design and efficiency and reductions in cost are making electrical generation with solar panels a more viable option each and every day.

The price of whole house generators is also becoming lower and lower. Consumers want generators to ensure they have power for an ever increasing array of electrical devices in their homes in the event of an accident or natural disaster. Many people live in areas where utility lines are not buried and an above ground line services their home, making them more susceptible to power loss for a variety of reasons.

Other people choose generators because they recognize utility infrastructure is a tempting target for thieves and others who mean to do harm and simply feel it is prudent to be fully prepared. It is a real concern and I am pleased the committee will be taking up Rep. Steffen's bill, AB 547, which I co-sponsored, to address that issue.

If you choose to generate power on-site via the installation of wind turbines, solar panels or generators wired to your home electrical system there should be a simple, succinct requirement in statute for the installation of a conspicuous externally located disconnect switch accessible to utility workers and first responders along with notice of where the disconnect is located.

While this legislation was not easily drafted it is intended to protect line workers, electrical contractors, firefighters and the general public. Current rules in place with the Public Service Commission are complex. Therein lies a problem. As DG becomes more readily available to consumers through outlets

like Lowes, Home Depot and other retailers we are going to see these devices installed by persons who may not be aware of the need to work with their utility and abide by PSC rules. When you visit utility websites and review documents the Public Service Commission has produced – the need for disconnect switches is emphasized yet the system operates under the presumption proper procedures are going to be followed.

However, I have been told that in some cases electrical utilities only find out that a DG device is installed only when there is a spike in power on their lines.

When there is a fire, no one wants firefighters to be forced to delay action due to concerns over whether or not there is electrical current running through the wires of a home. Nor do any of us want to put the lives of our utility workers at risk for just trying to do their jobs.

It is my hope that the hearing today will generate discussion and constructive suggestions that would enable this bill to move forward in the process. I know Electric Cooperatives strongly support the goals of this legislation and I do plan on working to address concerns with wording they feel may reduce their level of autonomy. Utility workers and utilities are also supportive of measures that can be taken to increase safety for workers, first responders, customers and the general public. I appreciate very much the feedback they have provided as this bill was drafted and introduced and look forward to working with them on any amendment that may be necessary.

Thank you again for the hearing on this bill. I look forward to working with members of the committee, utilities, utility workers and members of the public and would welcome questions.

**International Brotherhood
Of
Electrical Workers**
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Date: December 7, 2015

RE: proposed LRB#3478_P1

To whom it may concern;

Local 965 represents Utility workers in the state of Wisconsin that work at some of the Distribution Electric Cooperatives in rural Wisconsin and the utility workers at one of the Investor-Owned Utilities located in Wisconsin. Our members work on Customer premises regularly and can encounter safety hazards in the form of back feeding electrical voltage through the customer's system back onto utility side lines when they have either a generator or a distributive generation system.

As we see it, with an increase in usage and installation of customer generation systems in Wisconsin and with the continued and increase usage of home back-up generators when outages occur, we are encouraged by the safety language contained in this proposed legislation as it will help insure the additional safety for the utility worker that may be exposed to these possible back feeds on the electrical system.

Respectfully,

Mike Pyne
Assistant Business Manager
IBEW Local 965

CC: Tony Bartels
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