2026 National Electrical Code Significant changes

There are some global updates worth noting. The term “over current protective device” was replaced with the acronym “OCPD,” reducing repetitive text while standardizing terminology. The term “overcurrent device” was also updated to overcurrent protective device (OCPD). Similarly, the designation “AC” was added to rules that only apply to alternating-current circuits, clarifying that these requirements do not extend to DC systems.

Many Articles in the 2026 NEC are either new, relocated, or deleted.

1. Section 110.3(B) Installation and Use. A sentence was added to the requirement specifying that a manufacturer’s installation instructions must result in an installation and use that complies with the code. This change addresses recurring issues where instructions have suggested or implied configurations that conflict with code rules—such as improper GFCI protection. This clarification reinforces that compliance with the NEC cannot be overridden by manufacturer guidance.

2. Section 110.16 Arc-Flash Hazard Marking. Sections 110.16(A) and (B) were combined, and the previous generic “Warning—Arc Flash Hazard” requirement along with the 1000-amp threshold were removed. Marking and labeling requirements are limited to installations for “other than dwelling units”.

Temporary services are not exempt from the section 110.16 labeling requirement even if located on residential property. Due to the potential proximity of the transformer and the extended duration that a temporary service may remain in use during construction, labeling is required.

Labels must now provide actionable information, including:

- **Nominal System Voltage** (Example: 480V, 208V, etc.)
- **Arc Flash Boundary** (The distance at which a person could receive a second-degree burn if an arc flash occurs)
- **Available incident energy OR minimum required PPE level** (Incident energy expressed in cal/cm^2 OR the PPE category per NFPA 70E tables)
- **Date the assessment was completed**

For many installations, the minimum required arc flash boundary and level of PPE protection can be determined using the table method found in NFPA 70E Table 130.7(C)(15)(a). This table provides a simplified approach for calculating PPE requirements based on equipment type, voltage, and available fault current, ensuring compliance without the need for a full incident energy analysis.

https://www.nfpa.org/codes-and-standards/nfpa-70e-standard-development/70e

In summary, the table method can't be used when:

a. **Available fault current exceeds the limit in the table**
Example: For a panelboard 240/120 V, if the available bolted fault current is greater than the table's maximum value, you cannot use the table.
b. **The clearing time of the overcurrent protection device (OCPD) exceeds the table's maximum clearing time**
If the OCPD is slow, mis-coordinated, or not documented, you cannot use the table.
c. **The equipment type doesn't match what the table is designed for**
The tables **only** apply to specific equipment categories:

1. Panelboards
2. Motor control centers
3. Switchboards
4. Switchgear
5. Disconnects, etc.

**If the equipment isn't listed, the table method doesn't apply.
d. **The equipment is in a condition not considered "properly installed and maintained."**
If the equipment is old, damaged, dirty, corroded, modified, undocumented, or maintenance history is unknown, you cannot use the table.

3. Section 120.7(B)(C) Power Control Systems (PCSs). (B) PCS Control Setting. When used in load calculations, the control setting is not permitted to exceed 80% of the overcurrent protective device rating for the circuit being monitored by the PCS. Load calculations can use a listed PCS with a control setting not exceeding 80% of the overcurrent protective device. This prevents overload of the branch-circuit, feeder, or service conductors.

(C) Load Calculations Using PCS. The load on the branch circuit, feeder, or service must be the sum of the controlled loads. Controlled loads are determined in Sec. 120.7(C)(1), and noncontrolled loads are determined in Sec. 120.7(C)(2).
a. **Controlled Loads.** Controlled loads must be based on the monitoring by the PCS to provide overload control. The PCS control configuration must comply with one or both of the following:

1. If the PCS monitors only controlled loads, the control setting must be used in place of the controlled loads in load calculations.

2. If the PCS monitors both controlled and noncontrolled loads, the minimum operating current of the controlled loads must be used in place of the controlled loads in load calculations.
3. Noncontrolled Loads. Load calculations for loads not controlled by the PCS must comply with Art. 120, Parts II through VII.

Note: Minimum operating current is a value greater than or equal to zero representing the minimum current of the controlled loads.

4. Section 120.82(B) General Lighting Load, 2VA. (1) General Lighting. The general lighting load is based on 2VA per sq ft for general lighting and general-use receptacles. The sq ft area is determined in accordance with Sec. 120.5(C). Based on studies by the Department of Energy, the general lighting and receptacle load in a dwelling unit was reduced from "3VA" to "2VA" per square foot for feeder/service load calculations.

5. Section 120.82(D) Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment Load at 100%. (D) Electric Vehicle Supply Equipment (EVSE). Use 100% of the electric vehicle supply equipment nameplate rating in accordance with Sec. 120.57. For the dwelling unit optional method, the electric vehicle supply equipment (EVSE) load is required to be calculated at 100% with no demand factor because it represents a significant load.

6. Section 210.8(A)(2) Garages. A new list item (2) has been added to NEC 210.8(A) to separate "garages" from item (3), which now applies to "accessory buildings not intended as habitable rooms and limited to storage, work, and similar areas." Additionally, the phrase "that have a floor located at or below grade level" has been removed because elevation does not eliminate the shock hazard. For purposes of applying GFCI requirements, if a garage contains habitable spaces—such as a finished room in or above the garage—it does not require GFCI protection for those habitable areas, like that of an accessory building in item (3).

7. Section 210.8(F) Dwelling outdoor outlets. A new exception was added to allow Class C GFCI protection for listed HVAC equipment after September 1, 2026. If a Class C SPGFCI is provided, the disconnect serving the HVAC equipment is now required to be marked with a warning that "Class C SPGFCI protection is provided for an HVAC unit".

210.8(F) is not applicable to:
• Outdoor outlets that are not readily accessible such as submersible well pumps, sewer lift pumps, load management controllers, surge protection devices, or similar equipment.
• Outdoor lighting outlets

8. Section 210.12(E) Branch circuit wiring extensions, modifications, or replacements. In list item (2), the words "or switch" were added as another option for providing AFCI

protection for branch-circuit wiring that has been modified, replaced, or extended. This means a listed Outlet Branch-Circuit AFCI (OBCAFCI) can now be installed at the first receptacle outlet or switch of the existing branch circuit, offering more flexibility for compliance when extending or altering circuits.

9. Section 210.52(A)(2) Receptacle wall space receptacles. In Subdivision (A)(2), Wall Space, list item (1) was revised to exclude any fixed cabinet from the wall space measurement. Previously, only fixed cabinets without countertops or similar work surfaces were excluded. This change simplifies the rule by removing ambiguity and ensures that all fixed cabinets are excluded when determining required receptacle outlet placement.

10. Sections 210.52(A)(5) and 210.52(C)(4). Were revised to address prohibited locations for receptacle outlets associated with countertops and work surfaces. Under this change, receptacle outlets can't be located 24 inches beneath or adjacent to the countertops or work surface. This clarification ensures outlets remain accessible and safe. A new exception permits hardwired receptacle outlets installed in drawers below countertops and work surfaces, providing flexibility while maintaining compliance. The language in 210.52(C)(4) specifies that a receptacle cannot be installed on adjacent walls extending from base cabinets within 24 inches. For consistent interpretation, the 24-inch measurement will be taken from the nearest surface edge of the countertop or work surface extending below as covered in (A)(5).

11. Sections 215.18 and 230.67 Surge protection. In the 2023 NEC, new language was added—similar to Section 230.67—to require surge protection devices (SPDs) for both feeders and outside feeders. The purpose of this protection is to limit damage to electronic devices and equipment, which can be rendered inoperable by a surge. The areas where surge protection is required have been expanded and now include new installations as well as replacement distribution equipment located in:

1. Dwelling units
2. Dormitories
3. Guest rooms and guest suites of hotels, motels and dormitories
4. Areas of nursing homes and limited-care facilities used exclusively as patient sleeping rooms
5. Areas designed for use exclusively as sleeping quarters in fire stations, police stations, ambulance stations, rescue stations, ranger stations, and similar locations

The Type 1 or Type 2 SPD must be installed in or adjacent to the distribution equipment connected to the load side of the feeder that contains branch circuit overcurrent protective device(s). In addition, the SPD shall have a nominal discharge current rating (In) of not less than 10kA.

Below are specific conditions determined to meet the intent of the section. For other types of installations, please consult with your local inspector.

Residential Pole-Mounted Service Disconnects or Panelboards: Surge protection is required under NEC 230.67. However, Exception (B) allows the SPD to be installed in the first downstream feeder panel within the dwelling unit. This also applies when a service disconnect (without a panelboard) is mounted directly on the dwelling—the SPD may be located in the feeder supplied panelboard downstream.

Service Panelboards with Extended Busbars (Service/Feeder Combo Panels): These panels, commonly called "farm panels" or "farm feed-through panels," act as both service and feeder equipment. When mounted on the dwelling, they require surge protection in all cases, in accordance with NEC 230.67 and 215.18.

SPD Placement Based on Panelboard Location: Surge protection installed at the exterior service or feeder supplied panelboard mounted on the dwelling, additional downstream SPDs may or may not be necessary under the following conditions:

- No additional SPD is required if the downstream distribution equipment is located nearest point of entry.
- Additional SPD is required if the panelboard is located further inside the structure away from the distribution equipment.
- Any additional feeder panelboards located in adjacent room or area away from the main distribution equipment would require an SPD. An example would be a mechanical room panelboard with an SPD supplying an attached garage or upper addition panelboard.

Single-Equipment Disconnects (e.g., for A/C or Hot Tubs): SPDs are not required for disconnects serving only one piece of equipment. However, if the disconnect also provides overcurrent protection and supplies additional loads (e.g., a convenience receptacle alongside a hot tub), it now functions as a feeder supplied panelboard—and surge protection becomes necessary.

12. Section 225.31 and 225.41 Outside feeder disconnecting means. Sections 225.31 and 225.41 were updated to clarify requirements for the location of feeder disconnecting means serving buildings or structures. When the disconnecting means is installed outside the building, it must be in a readily accessible location and located on the building or within sight of the building, as defined in 110.29.

If the disconnecting means is located inside the building, it must still be installed at the nearest point of entrance of the feeder conductors into that building.

Note: When a building or structure is supplied by multiple feeders of the same characteristic (for example, same voltage and phase) permitted by section 225.30(B), the feeder disconnecting means supplying the building or structure must be grouped at the load end of the feeders. The grouped disconnects shall have a grounding electrode system installed that complies with 250.32(B)(1).

13. Section 230.70 Service Disconnect. The section was modified to incorporate the language from the deleted Section 230.85, Emergency Disconnect, requiring the service disconnect for one- and two-family dwellings to be located outside. Under 230.70(A)(1), the service disconnecting means for one- and two-family dwellings must be installed in a readily accessible outdoor location either on or within sight of the dwelling unit. Section 230.70(A)(2) addresses other than one- and two-family dwellings, requiring the service disconnecting means to be installed in a readily accessible location either outside the building or inside nearest the point of entrance of the service conductors. These changes ensure emergency accessibility and consistency across dwelling types. Utility-provided disconnects will no longer be accepted as the emergency disconnect unless they comply with Section 230.70. In most cases, these disconnects are not considered the service disconnect and are not located within sight (visible and within 50 feet).

14. Section 250.64(C)(2) Grounding electrode splicing. The requirement has been revised to allow the splicing of grounding electrode conductors using listed grounding and bonding equipment, provided the splice is made at an accessible location. Splicing by exothermic welding and irreversible compression type connectors remain permitted for both accessible and non-accessible locations.

15. Section 300.4(C) Conductor limitations. New language was added for damaged conductors and wiring methods. Conductors and wiring methods that have become unsuitable due to damage—such as overheating, fire, corrosion, or water—must be replaced. See the related NEMA documents for guidance: NEMA GD 1 2019 for water damaged electrical equipment and wiring, and NEMA GD 2 2021 for fire or heat damaged electrical equipment and wiring.

16. Section 314.27(B)(2) Ceiling-suspended (Paddle) fan outlet box requirements. The revised language clarifies required locations for ceiling outlet boxes intended for ceiling-suspended (paddle) fans. Ceiling outlet boxes mounted **centrally** in the ceilings of dwelling living and sleeping areas, in locations that are typical for fan installation, and in locations indicated by the designer or building owner for fan installation, must meet one of the following requirements for fan support. This ensures that outlet boxes in these designated areas are properly rated and capable of supporting the weight and load of a ceiling-suspended fan. The outlet box is required to meet one of the following:

1. Be listed for the support of ceiling-suspended (paddle) fans.
2. Be installed to allow direct access through the box to structural framing capable of supporting a ceiling-suspended (paddle) fan without removing the box.

17. Section 334.10 exception to (3) -Exception for NM Cable Thermal Barrier. An exception has been added to permit non-habitable grade-level storage garages and storage buildings less than 1500 square feet to use NM cable without the 15-minute thermal barrier. The thermal barrier requirement exists primarily to allow occupants time to exit a building during a fire without inhaling toxic fumes from the cable jacket. However, these small, grade-level detached garages and storage buildings typically have minimal electrical provisions and are small enough that occupants can exit within seconds, making the thermal barrier unnecessary. The square footage is based on the entire building area, not the individual storage units or any separate addition to a larger existing structure.

18. Section 513.8 Underground Classification at Aircraft hangers. The revised text removes the requirement to classify underground installations at aircraft hangars as Class I, Division 1. This change aligns with the provisions in Section 514.8, which govern underground wiring at motor fuel dispensing facilities. By eliminating this classification, the NEC reduces unnecessary restrictions while maintaining safety standards consistent with similar hazardous locations. However, the requirement will mandate that a boundary seal be provided on both ends of the raceway where the conduit emerges from grade, ensuring containment of vapors.

19. Section 514.11 Emergency Disconnect for Fuel Dispensing Areas. The revised updates extracted language from NFPA 30A 6.7.4 and added clarification to include receptacles located over or adjacent to motor fuel dispensing devices within hazardous classified locations. The emergency electrical disconnect, among other sources outlined in 514.11, must now also disconnect any receptacles positioned over or adjacent to the dispenser in the event of an incident—such as a fuel leak or spill—to prevent electrical equipment from becoming an ignition source. This change enhances safety by ensuring all potential ignition sources near the dispenser are de-energized during emergencies.

20. Section 547.44(C) Equipotential Plane Construction Requirements. Text was added to include specific requirements for the construction of the equipotential plane, addressing a gap in previous NEC editions where no installation details were provided. Previously, Article 547 only contained an Informational Note referencing the ASEA/ASABE EP473.2001(R2015) standard. The new language ensures consistency throughout the NEC by providing detailed instructions on how the equipotential plane is to be constructed and bonded to the electrical system. Recognized construction methods include the use of structural reinforcing steel, unencapsulated welded wire, and copper grid, while also

addressing considerations for non-conductive surfaces to ensure proper bonding and safety in agricultural and similar environments. **Similar requirements were added to Articles 555 and 682.**

21. Section 625.44 Equipment Connections. (B) Hand-Fastened Equipment. Equipment that is hand-fastened must be connected to the premises wiring system by one of the following methods:

1. Nonlocking, 2-pole, 3-wire grounding-type receptacle outlet rated 125V or 250V, single-phase, in accordance with one of the following:
    a. 15A or 20A
    b. 30A or 50A listed for EVSE and WPTE use.
2. Nonlocking, 3-pole, 4-wire grounding-type receptacle outlet rated 250V, 3-phase, in accordance with one of the following:
    a. 15A or 20A
    b. 30A, 50A, or 60A listed for EVSE and WPTE use
3. Nonlocking, 3-pole, 4-wire grounding-type receptacle outlet rated 125V/250V, single-phase, in accordance with one of the following:
    a. 15A or 20A
    b. 30A, 50A, or 60A listed for EVSE and WPTE use.

This new rule addresses when receptacles for EVSE must be listed for EVSE use. The most common point of failure in an electrical system is at the connection point. All 30A, 50A, and 60A receptacles used for EV charging must be listed for EVSE use. This change addresses the growing issue of receptacle failures due to high temperatures under continuous loads — especially with cord and plug connections. Receptacles listed for EVSE use are specifically designed and tested for continuous load conditions, helping ensure safe and reliable charging over extended periods.

22. Section 680.26 Equipotential bonding at a swimming pool. The height requirement for the perimeter surface has been increased from 2 feet to 3 feet below the maximum water level. This change addresses the increased risk of swimmers entering or exiting the pool, as well as individuals who may be in simultaneous contact with both the perimeter surface and the pool water. Additionally, the bonding requirements for non-conductive and conductive perimeter surfaces have been revised. In most cases, a single #8 AWG conductor will no longer be permitted.

23. Section 695.7(A)(1) Fire pump supply conductors. The language in 695.7(A)(1) was revised and relocated from 695.6 to remove the reference to 230.6, as the reference was redundant. Section 230.6 already applies generally throughout the Code to determine when conductors are considered outside a building, so retaining it within 695.7(A)(1) was unnecessary.

Additionally, revisions to 695.7(A)(2) clarify protection requirements when fire pump feeder conductors must be routed through the interior of a building. The Code now expands the minimum required concrete encasement from 2 inches to 5 inches, unless an alternative protection method is documented and approved by a licensed professional engineer.

Note: Fire pump feeder conductors installed in a manner that qualifies as outside the building—such as being located below a 2-inch concrete slab in accordance with the criteria of 230.6—are not required to meet the 5-inch encasement provisions of 695.7(A)(2).