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The NABCEP Newsletter highlights activities about its certificants and other stakeholders. There is no fee for this newsletter which is distributed six times/year and published on [NABCEP's website](#).

If you have comments about this newsletter, email Jane Pulaski at janep@irecusa.org.

As always, thanks for your interest in and support of NABCEP.

Jane Pulaski
Editor

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From the Chair: A Farewell, a Hello *By Ezra Auerbach*



This is my last column as NABCEP's Chair, and at the same time my first Executive Director's column. I am pleased to say that the Board of NABCEP has asked me to become the organization's Executive Director. I started my new job on June 1, 2009. In the meantime, Jane Weissman is acting Chair while NABCEP looks internally and externally for a new Chair and my replacement on the Board.

As outgoing Chair, I want to use this column to reflect backwards.

Over the past seven years that I've served on the Board we've seen NABCEP go from a "new" concept of certifying solar professionals to the industry "gold standard" for PV and solar thermal installers. In addition we brought in a very successful Entry Level Certificate of Knowledge certification. Currently, there are over 700 PV installer certificants, nearly 100 solar thermal installer certificants. The Certificate of Knowledge (COK) program is gaining momentum with over 2000 certificants- more than double the number we had in January of this year. NABCEP is most assuredly making a positive difference in the quality of renewable installations in the country. A study conducted for NYSERDA (New York State Energy Research and Development Authority) sums it up nicely: "...systems installed by NABCEP certified installers have fewer problems at time of inspection than those installed by non-certified installers."

The progress has been steady and extremely fast; much like the explosive growth of the PV industry in the past few years. Not prepared to "rest on our laurels," the NABCEP Board has asked staff to continue rolling out new certifications and Certificate of Knowledge programs which continue to meet the needs of our growing industry. To that end, we are working on a Small Wind Installer Certification – the task analysis has been approved, as have the requirements to sit for the exam. A technical committee of wind experts will work on the exam with a different group of individuals working on a study guide. We have started work on a Solar Thermal Certificate of Knowledge and are beginning to develop a task analysis for a Solar Electric Technical Sales Certification.

As Executive Director, one of my many responsibilities is seeking new sources of funding for NABCEP. Currently, we rely on the generous support from the Department of Energy and NYSERDA, along with fees from test takers and educational providers. However, we need wider financial resources to support our existing programs as well as to grow new ones. This year, we started a campaign to bring in contributions from individuals and businesses with some modest success. We Energies <http://www.we-energies.com/> of Wisconsin took the lead with a significant contribution and became our first Platinum Sponsor. RML Electric of sunny Phoenix, Arizona <http://www.rmlelectric.com/default.htm> has become our first Green Level Sponsor. Join We Energies and RML Electric and contribute today at whatever level you or your company can afford. Your generous financial support will help us to continue the work we are doing to further quality renewable energy installations. To learn more about how you can contribute to NABCEP please visit <http://www.nabcep.org/become-a-donor>.

The NABCEP booth and staff will be out-and-about during June at the PV America 2009 conference in Philadelphia, and the Midwest Renewable Energy Fair in Custer, Wisconsin. If you're there, please stop by our booth and visit us.

Special NABCEP Administration Update: North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners Names Ezra Auerbach New Executive Director



Ezra Auerbach has been appointed as NABCEP's Executive Director. Ezra's involvement in the renewable energy industry spans many years, and has served as the Chair of NABCEP's Board of Directors for five years. He resigned his position as Chair to assume his new duties as Executive Director. "I'm thrilled at the chance to advance my volunteer, part-time passion for NABCEP's mission to a full-time occupation," said Mr. Auerbach. "I know the magnitude of this job and am well aware that I

have big shoes to fill. The fact that we can once again contemplate in-house management of NABCEP speaks volumes about the quality of work that Rebecca Eaton and her team from Think Energy have done.”

Acting Chair of NABCEP’s Board of Directors Jane Weissman, said; “We hired Think Energy at a time when NABCEP needed focused assistance in organization and management, and now that the organization is on sound footing, it is the right time to transition our management from an external company to a full-time Executive Director.”

NABCEP will be consolidating operations and personnel in its Malta, N.Y. office. Mr. Auerbach stated that, “NABCEP is going to build a strong team here in the Albany area, and to that end one of my first priorities is to build a talented and diverse staff.” He requests that interested parties visit NABCEP’s website — <http://www.nabcep.org>— and visit the “news” section to view upcoming job openings.

Installer’s Corner: Vicki McAninch, Meridian Solar, Austin, Texas



Vicki McAninch is a remarkable wearer of many hats. At Meridian Solar, she’s answered phones, invoiced clients, designed and installed PV systems for residential and commercial clients. She’s technically brilliant: graduating from Baylor University in 2000 with a BS in Engineering with electronic and computer emphases. She’s a mom with two daughters, and is currently the only female NABCEP-certified PV installer in Texas. I was delighted to catch up with her and learn more about her work. Here’s our conversation:

NABCEP: Hi Vicki, and congratulations on becoming the first female NABCEP-certified PV installer in Texas. That’s some distinction. I’m curious; what inspired you to get into the solar business? Did you see yourself up on the roof installing PV systems? I’m sure you carry your weight (plus those of PV panels). What’s a typical day for you at Meridian, or is there no such thing as a typical day at Meridian?

VM: Honestly, I have mixed feelings about being the first female in Texas to attain the NABCEP certification. On the one hand, I am sure it’s a distinction that I will remind my daughters of (with pride) from time to time, but to be the first NABCEP-certified Texas female installer in the five years since the exam was first offered is a lonely position to be in. I would love to see more women on the technical side of renewable energy, and in the future that will be the case. I’ll take the chance to mention organizations like Solar Energy International, Society of Women Engineers, MREA, Solar Living Institute and the like, who deserve credit for extending targeted efforts to women becoming involved in solar or technology in general. Rest assured that there are solar sisters here in Texas. The solar industry, in general, is very supportive of women, but as with many other construction-oriented trades, PV installation crews tend to be male dominated.

I first became acquainted with the renewable energy industry here in Austin in 2003 when I met the president and CEO of Meridian Solar, Andrew McCalla, at the 'Green Festival' when it was hosted in Austin in the summer of 2003. Meridian offered me an opportunity to couple my engineering degree and experience in the semiconductor industry with my interest in sustainable living, renewable energy and permaculture that

could not be turned down. I have worn a lot of hats over the years at Meridian, and the company has changed substantially. Currently, I'm not wrenching. I'm designing systems and producing AutoCAD drawings for both residential and commercial projects.

I became NABCEP-certified in October 2008, but becoming a PV installer was not something that I had set out to do after college. It has been a long held belief of mine that to be a good engineer or designer, one must have experience with applied aspect of the technology to design any system, and that is why I wanted to install PV systems.

NABCEP: Andrew has had a successful business from the beginning. In fact, he was in the first group of certificants when NABCEP administered its first PV certifying exam in October 2003. I've lost count of how many Meridian employees are NABCEP-certified.

VM: Meridian currently employs seven of the twenty-three NABCEP Certified Solar PV Installers in Texas, which is more than any other firm. An additional three Texas certificants are former Meridian employees who have moved on to other impressive endeavors. It is not uncommon for the NABCEP certification to be a springboard to advancement. The labor pool for experienced PV personnel is tight, and the pool of certified personnel is exceptionally tight. For example, our NABCEP certified personnel work in executive management, project management, design, sales, installation crew lead and trainer, and master electrician.

NABCEP: Between Austin Energy's solar rebate initiative and the new federal tax incentives, you guys are keeping busy at Meridian not only in Austin, but in other cities in Texas and other states as well. Pity Texas still doesn't have a state-wide incentive program yet.

VM: Certainly, we install outside of Austin! We just completed work on the largest PV installation in Texas at the former Pearl Brewery in San Antonio. We have also completed installations out of state; a comprehensive portfolio of our installations can be found on our website.

Our municipal utility, Austin Energy, has been a progressive steward of renewable energy, conservation and green building programs in Texas. Other utilities are following suit with conservation and solar rebate programs of their own. In general, widening acceptance of PV technology and distributed on-site RE generation, the efforts to curb global warming, the energy crisis, reliance on foreign energy sources, need for less polluting electrical generating capacity and the like don't add up to people, organizations and businesses investing in solar without the financial returns being favorable. I would rather see renewable energy being subsidized to the same level as nuclear or coal, but in the meantime, hats off to the organizations that are helping PV to be financially feasible.

It would be nice to see the State of Texas added to the list of states to offer a statewide rebate program. Advances in manufacturing and product development will also help to bring the cost of solar down in the future. The renewable energy industry must continue to grow and mature, and the people of Meridian and other companies like ours will continue to stay busy facilitating that growth. Activity has been gaining speed. Last year, when the renewable energy tax credit extension was uncertain, we experienced a sustained lull before and after the credits were reinstated. The economic slow down kept

business suppressed, but that seems to be behind us now. All of our installers are full-time employees of the company, and even during the last industry lull, Meridian was able to continue to hire and grow.

NABCEP: I'm not at all surprised. Growth is good, but not without its challenges.

VM: The industry as a whole continues to expand at a phenomenal rate. There are always new product offerings, technological advances, code revisions, rebate programs and incentives, legislation, utility tariffs, permitting jurisdictions and industry news to keep up to date on. The constant growth of the company paired with a substantial amount of work to complete, creates a challenging environment to keep pace with while balancing personal priorities. I feel that the key to succeeding at keeping current is the sharing of ideas and information among my colleagues, and the availability of good industry specific publications and information outlets.

NABCEP: What's the size of the residential system these days? Does Meridian install more commercial than residential systems, or vice versa?

VM: I have been encountering increasing demand from commercial projects. Commercial design and installation is typically more complex due to the scale, specifics of interconnection, safety, equipment and logistics of the installation. Meridian is currently performing around 65 to 70% of installed kW in commercial applications.

Residential systems are getting larger, but typical system size usually linked to the constructs of any incentive program offered. I see quite a few 6kW to 7kW residential systems these days, but system size varies greatly. For example, we recently completed a 38.4kW residential system.

NABCEP: If the size of systems are getting larger and more complicated, it makes me think that perhaps today's solar consumer is better informed, even more enthusiastic about solar PV than ever.

VM: As more incentive programs are being offered, more people are realizing that investing in solar makes good financial sense. Generally speaking, it was more common for a residential customer who was contemplating a photovoltaic installation to have performed a quite a bit of homework relating to solar before investing. Now, the decision to invest in a solar electric system is easier to arrive at because the financial hurdles have been lessened. A short six years ago, renewable energy and conservation was not in the newspapers or discussed among the masses as it is today. It is the case that people, in general, are better informed about renewable energy, and there are more information outlets available now.

NABCEP: You've been at this work since 2003. You've seen lots of growth and changes, but I'm curious to know what has surprised you most? What's ahead for you in this industry?

VM: The growth and changes industry wide have been incredible in such a short period of time. It has been my good fortune joining Meridian as a young company while the renewable energy industry was gaining momentum towards the explosive growth that we see now. This has allowed me to wear many hats at Meridian. There's no shortage of

opportunities to grow professionally. Looking ahead, I am planning on pursuing my professional engineer's license, and continuing to design renewable energy systems.

NABCEP: Sounds like you at Meridian are a good fit. Thanks so much for taking time to talk with us, Vicki. Keep up the great work.

Entry Level Certificate Program

By Timothée Néron-Bancel

The Entry Level continues to grow strongly with many classes offered by Providers apparently booked throughout the summer. Simply through word-of-mouth, the program has added 20 new Providers of the Entry Level Certificate of Knowledge exam in the last two months meaning that there are now 104 providers around the country. These new providers are:

- Crater Lake Electrical JATC
- Rio Salado College
- AltE University
- Alfred State College
- John A. Logan College
- St. Paul College
- Ann Arbor Electrical JATC
- SW Washington JATC
- New Technology Training Institute
- Westside Technical Center/ Orange County Public Schools
- Ohlone College
- Electrical JATC of Watertown, NY
- Oregon Career & Technology Center
- Kankakee Community College
- Mira Costa College
- NECA-IBEW Electrical Training Center
- St. Paul Electrical JATC, IBEW Local 110
- The English Center
- The Solar Living Institute
- Massasoit Community College

We have also seen a great increase in certificate holders since March. In April we added 167 new certificate holders which represented a 9% increase from March and as of May 29th, we have added 487 new certificate holders to our ranks; a 25% increase from the month of April, meaning there are now 2,419 students who have obtained the Certificate of Knowledge.

In these past two months, the Entry Level Certificate of Knowledge has shown great strength and growth and we wish to thank all of our current providers for their dedication to this program.

Continuing Education/Recertification

By Timothée Néron-Bancel

Following Solar Success 2009 held at the ASES 2009 conference, we wish to remind providers and prospective installers that continuing education credits have been registered with NABCEP for current NABCEP Certified Installers to use during their re-certification.

For prospective installers applying to sit for the solar PV or solar thermal certification exam and wishing to fulfill their “board-recognized training” requirement, continuing education credits will be accepted but they are not the only type of board-recognized training available.

According to Section 3.2.3 of the Candidate Information Handbook, *Some type of training/education is required for achieving this certification. It is recommended that applicants look for training courses with Institute of Sustainable Power (ISP) accreditation (i.e., Midwest Renewable Energy Association), or similar accreditation.* NABCEP will accept training to meet entry requirement option (a, b, c, and d) when the training meets the following outcomes:

- ❖ A minimum of 40 hours cumulative (can include product training).
- ❖ Have a formal training format, with a teacher-learner structure. This implies a connection between a learner and a learning source. It can include classroom time led by an instructor and/or discussion leader. It can also include activities in which a learner is engaged in a planned learning event in which he/she is separated from faculty and other students but where the learner receives some sort of feedback and the learner’s progress is monitored. Examples include computer-assisted instruction, interactive video/CD/DVD and/or web site learning.
- ❖ Covers core competencies from the PV Installer Task Analysis, including the National Electrical Code® and OSHA safety standards relevant to PV installation

Types of training programs may include but are not limited to:

1. Offered by any accredited university, college, or community college (i.e., Lane Community College, San Juan College)
2. Dedicated independent training programs (e.g. Florida Solar Energy Center, Solar Energy International, Great Lakes Renewable Energy Association, etc.)
3. Apprenticeship training programs (e.g. National Joint Apprenticeship Training Committee, Department of Labor approved apprenticeship programs)
4. Those approved by State Contractor Licensing Boards
5. Vocational/Technical training programs (e.g. Board of Cooperative Educational Services/New York, British Columbia Institute of Technology)
6. Industry in-house training programs (i.e. Manufacturers)

Other News

--NABCEP looking for operations associate

North American Board of Certified Energy Practitioners (NABCEP) is looking for an Operations Associate to join our team in the Albany, New York office. The employee will answer phones, respond to inquiries, enter data and testing information, communicate regularly with the Maryland and Florida teams working on NABCEP projects, process invoices and other book keeping duties, and occasionally staff the organization's booth at industry conferences. The Operations Associate will report to the Operations Manager in the New York office.

In addition to possessing organizational skills and an ability to work well with others, the ideal candidate will have experience in book keeping and data entry, strong written and verbal skills, and an eye for detail. Qualified applicants will have a bachelor's degree, a minimum of two years work experience, and interest in the renewable energy industry.

If you believe you can bring value to our team, please let us know. We welcome resumes and cover letters from qualified individuals. Documentation should be submitted to Ms. Casey Grey Miller at cmiller@nabcep.org. Only candidates selected for an interview will be contacted. Please do not call to review the status of your application.

--Deadline for applications for September 12, 2009 exam

The next NABCEP PV and Solar Thermal certifying exams is scheduled for Saturday, September 12, 2009. Application deadline for this exam is Friday, July 17. Applications received after the July 17th deadline will be considered for the March 2010 exam.

--Where in the world is NABCEP?

NABCEP will be on the road during the month of June, and NABCEP staff members look forward to seeing you as we travel across the country presenting information and hosting our colorful booth to spread the word about the importance of NABCEP's Certification and Certificate Programs in the renewable energy market. Upcoming conferences include:

- PV America 2009 in Philadelphia, PA – June 8- June 10 at booth #2308
- A Speaker Event at the Small Wind Conference on June 17 – Stevens Point, WI
- Midwest Renewable Energy Fair – Custer, Wisconsin – June 19-June 21
- Solar Power 2010 – Anaheim, CA – October 27-29

NABCEP often has complimentary guest passes so if you would like to attend the conference and help NABCEP staff with the booth, please email info@nabcep.org

NABCEP is the national certification organization for professional installers in the field of renewable energy.

NABCEP issues voluntary certification credentials to those qualified professionals who satisfy eligibility requirements established by the Board of Directors.

NABCEP certification is not a professional license issued by a government agency, and does not authorize a certificant to practice.

NABCEP certificants must comply with all legal requirements related to practice, including licensing laws.

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The NABCEP News, an electronic newsletter published six times/year, serves the NABCEP-certificant and stakeholder community. There is no fee for this newsletter.

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