

SERVICE EQUIPMENT-DISCONNECTING MEANS 230.70 (A)

The language of 230.70 (A) as it presently appears in the State Electrical Code has been virtually unchanged over the last several decades. Even though this requirement has a substantial historical consistency its interpretation and application varies substantially throughout the State. Historically the tendency has been to retreat from a rather liberal enforcement which may have allowed for 15-25 feet of service entrance conductors within a structure to a very conservative interpretation which may preclude anything other than a strict back-to-back mounting of utility equipment and service equipment.

Depending on the geography of the construction and the individuals involved in the interpretation process either of these extremes or some middle ground may be applied to a specific construction site. Even on a given construction site it is increasingly difficult for a local constituency (contractor, Code enforcement official, owner, private inspector, fire services, utility, etc) to form a unanimous consensus of opinion. Such discrepancy of opinion detracts from public's perception of Code enforcement, creates unnecessary confusion and expense, and fails to provide consistent construction for safety.

This confusion is largely the result of an insufficient uniform interpretation or standard by which to evaluate a specific installation. For the purpose of establishing a uniform standard of evaluation, the Engineering Division of the Department of Insurance states its position relative to 230.70 (A) as follows:

“Service entrance conductors routed from their point of entrance into the structure, to their point of attachment to the service enclosure a distance horizontally not more than twice the nominal width of the service enclosure and vertically not more than the greater of 5’ or twice the nominal height of the service enclosure shall be considered to be in compliance with the requirements of 230.70 (A), 2002. Service entrance conductors may be routed in the most direct route or at right angles. Service entrance conductors in excess of these specified limits will not be allowed unless specifically authorized by special permission from the electrical inspector having jurisdiction to accommodate adverse site conditions which would not reasonably allow installation within this criteria.”

By stating such interpretation, it is specifically not the intent of this Division to encourage the utilization of excessive lengths of service entrance conductors when more direct routes are otherwise available; nor, to discourage local jurisdictions from allowing lengths beyond those specified when reasonable prudence and judgment would indicate reasonable necessity to accommodate safety or adverse site conditions. This Division will however render Code interpretations pertaining to 230.70 (A) within these constraints and refer requests for special permission exclusively to the electrical inspector having jurisdiction.