



NFPA® 79

Electrical Standard for  
Industrial Machinery  
Handbook 2015



NFPA®, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471, USA  
An International Codes and Standards Organization

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NFPA® 79  
Electrical Standard for  
Industrial Machinery  
Handbook 2015  
  
Second Edition

Annotated by Mark Cloutier



NFPA, 1 Batterymarch Park, Quincy, MA 02169-7471  
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## NFPA® 79

### Electrical Standard for Industrial Machinery

#### 2015 Edition

This edition of NFPA 79, *Electrical Standard for Industrial Machinery*, was prepared by the Technical Committee on Electrical Equipment of Industrial Machinery and released by the Correlating Committee on National Electrical Code®. It was issued by the Standards Council on April 29, 2014, with an effective date of May 19, 2014, and supersedes all previous editions.

This edition of NFPA 79 was approved as an American National Standard on May 19, 2014.

#### ▲ Origin and Development of NFPA 79

This standard was first submitted at the 1961 NFPA Annual Meeting under the title *Electrical Standard for Machine Tools* and was tentatively adopted subject to comments. It was extensively revised and resubmitted at the 1962 Annual Meeting, where it was officially adopted. In 1965 a revised edition was adopted, reconfirmed in 1969, and in 1970, 1971, 1973, 1974, 1977, 1980, 1985, 1987, 1991, 1994, 1997, 2002 and 2007, revised editions were adopted.

In September 1941, the metalworking machine tool industry wrote its first electrical standard to make machine tools safer to operate, more productive, and less costly to maintain, and to improve the quality and performance of their electrical components. That particular standard served as an American “War Standard.”

To study the special electrical problems involved with machine tools, in 1941 the Electrical Section of the National Fire Protection Association sanctioned a Special Subcommittee on Wiring, Overcurrent Protection, and Control of Motor-Operated Machine Tools. This subcommittee, cooperating with machine tool builders, manufacturers of control equipment, and Underwriters Laboratories Inc., conducted tests and investigated the peculiar conditions involved with machine tools that might warrant exception to certain specific *National Electrical Code*® requirements. This investigation resulted, on August 4, 1942, in a Tentative Interim Amendment and first appeared in a 1943 supplement to the 1940 edition of the *National Electrical Code* as Article 670, “Machine Tools.” It remained essentially unchanged through the 1959 edition.

Meanwhile, manufacturers of other types of industrial equipment erroneously began to follow the specialized practices permitted by Article 670. Late in 1952, a Technical Subcommittee on Fundamentals of Electrically Operated Production Machinery and Material Handling and Processing Equipment for Fixed Locations was organized to attempt to group the special requirements of this broad field into one article. The extremely broad scope introduced so many problems that, in December 1956, this technical subcommittee was reorganized into an NFPA committee whose scope was limited to machine tools and whose objective was the preparation of this NFPA standard with corresponding revisions in Article 670 in the *National Electrical Code*.

Modern machine tool electrical equipment may vary from that of single-motor machines, such as drill presses, that perform simple, repetitive operations, to that of very large, multimotored automatic machines that involve highly complex electrical control systems, including electronic and solid-state devices and equipment. Generally these machines are specially designed, factory wired, and tested by the builder and then erected in the plant in which they will be used. Because of their importance to plant production and their usually high cost, they are customarily provided with many safeguards and other devices not often incorporated in the usual motor and control application as contemplated by the *National Electrical Code*.

Although these machines may be completely automatic, they are constantly attended, when operating, by highly skilled operators. The machine usually incorporates many special devices to protect the operator, protect the machine and building against fires of electrical origin, protect the machine and work in process against damage due to electrical failures, and protect against loss of production due to failure of a machine component. To provide these

safeguards, it may be preferable to deliberately sacrifice a motor or some other component, rather than to chance injury to the operator, the work, or the machine. It is because of such considerations that this standard varies from the basic concepts of motor protection as contained in the *National Electrical Code*.

As NFPA 79 evolved, it became apparent that certain classes of light industrial machinery (e.g., small drill presses, bench grinders, sanders, etc.) were not appropriately covered. The 1977 edition of the standard recognized this problem and purposely excluded tools powered by 2 hp or less.

Subsequent to publication of the 1977 standard, a light industrial machinery standard development activity was initiated by the Power Tool Institute. The 1985 edition of NFPA 79 reflects this activity, and appropriate requirements are now included in the standard.

In 1975, the Society of the Plastics Industry requested that this standard be enlarged in scope to include plastics machinery. A formal request was received by NFPA in September 1978, and, through the combined efforts of the NFPA 79 committee and representatives of the Society of the Plastics Industry, the scope was broadened to include such machinery in the 1980 edition.

In June 1981, the Joint Industrial Council (JIC) Board of Directors acknowledged the dated state of the electrical and electronic standards and requested that NFPA 79 incorporate into its standard the material and topics covered by the JIC electrical (EMP-1-67, EGP-1-67) and electronic (EL-1-71) standards with the intention that the JIC standards eventually would be declared superseded. The NFPA Standards Council approved the request with the stipulation that the material and topics incorporated from the JIC standards be limited to areas related to electrical shock and fire hazards. The 1985 edition reflected the incorporation of the appropriate material from the JIC electrical (EMP-1-67, EGP-1-67) standards not previously covered. The 1991, 1994, and 1997 editions included additional references to international standards and reflected the committee's efforts in harmonization.

The 2002 edition was a major rewrite and represented a significant and historic effort in harmonizing an existing NFPA standard with an existing IEC standard. Major changes for this edition included renumbering section and chapter numbers to align with IEC 60204-1. A new chapter was added to address testing. An informative Annex A was added to assist the user in understanding the mandatory text portion of the standard, and a new annex, Annex H, was added to assist the user with cross-references to previous edition section numbers.

To better coordinate its work, this committee reports to the Association through the Correlating Committee of the National Electrical Code Committee. The primary reason is to correlate this standard and the *National Electrical Code*, especially with respect to Article 670.

The 2007 edition continued to be aligned with IEC 60204-1. Because so much electrical equipment today contains both electrical and electronic equipment, Chapter 11, Electronic Equipment, was deleted, and any sections that remained applicable were dispersed to the appropriate chapters. The deletion of Chapter 11 caused all chapters after Chapter 11 to be renumbered to one less than in previous editions. A new Chapter 19, entitled "Servo Drives and Motors," was added to the end of the standard. This new chapter addressed some of the user concerns that are arising as servo drives and servo motors are integrated into industrial machinery. Other changes include further defining of cables and cords, clarifying emergency stop functions, permitting system isolation equipment, clarifying short-circuit current markings, and refining requirements associated with software- and firmware-based control systems performing safety-related functions.

Changes to the 2012 edition continued to align the standard with IEC 60204-1. Due to the continued advancement and expansion of wireless and cableless technology, major changes for this edition included a revised definition for the term *cableless control* and a new definition for the term *cableless operator control station*, along with revisions to Chapter 9, which aligned with IEC 60204-1. The title of Chapter 6 was changed, to recognize that there are other hazards (such as arc flash and stored energy) besides electrical shock. New sections were added to Chapters 6 and 16 to recognize these hazards and correlate with *NFPA 70E*. Furthermore, the sections on the hazards from stored energy in Chapter 7 were moved to Chapter 6 for clarity and proper location of those rules in the document. To align with the *NEC*, the requirements in 7.2.10 were changed for selecting overcurrent devices for motors. Chapter 12 received a new section to address user concerns permitting the use of appliance wiring material (AWM) as special cables, with clarifications on determining suitability for use under specific conditions. An important addition of a 90°C (194°F) temperature column to the conductor ampacity table in Chapter 12 was included to correlate with the *NEC*.

Other changes included adding the definition for short-circuit current rating (SCCR), extracted from the *NEC*; revising the definition for equipment grounding conductor; and adding a new definition for safety-related function specific to industrial machines to harmonize with IEC and ISO standards. Further changes to Chapter 19 addressed some of the user concerns arising from servo drives and servo motors being more commonly used in industrial machinery. Adding ANSI indications to the appropriate UL referenced publications in several sections, Chapter 2, and Annex J provided consistency. Finally, adding an American Wire Gauge (AWG) to the metric conductor cross-reference table in Annex I provided the user and enforcement officials a means to judge AWG versus metric wire sizes required by the standard.

As in previous editions, the 2015 edition aligns with IEC 60204-1, and now the alignment is more intuitive and informative. Parenthetical terms that have always aligned with IEC terms throughout the main body of the document, but without explanation, now reside in Annex J along with further explanation for their use. Global changes of the editorial type have been accepted to comply with the *Manual of Style for NFPA Technical Committee Documents*. Two definitions have been added — *industrial control panel*, and *overcurrent protective device, branch circuit*. Seven definitions



have been deleted — *cable trunking systems* (3.3.16), *duct* (3.3.33), *earth* (3.3.34), *positive opening operation* (of a contact element) (3.3.74), *protective bonding circuit* (3.3.77), *protective conductor* (3.3.78), and *subassembly* (3.3.98). The title of Section 6.6 has been revised to “Arc Flash Hazard Warning” to clarify that the requirement is to warn, not to protect, qualified individuals of a potential arc flash hazard. This change aligns with the 2014 NEC revision to 110.16, which adds “or factory” to allow the required arc-flash warning label to be applied at the factory as well as in the field — a step that is more conducive to industrial machinery and industrial control panels.

The conditions for emergency stop on Category 1 and Category 0 have been revised, as well as those for emergency switching off. Working space rules for enclosures that contain supply conductors have been revised to clarify that 110.26 of the NEC applies, and an exhibit has been added to Annex A to illustrate the requirement. The requirement for width of the working space has also been revised to specify the opening into the control cabinet and to consider situations where there were devices involved with industrial machine control cabinets. Table 12.5.5(a) has been revised to add a 60 and 90 degree column, to correlate with the addition of a 90 degree column to 12.5.1 in the 2012 edition, and with the NEC. Finally, language has been revised to clarify the rules for separate supply sources; what standard is to be used for warning signs; how to calculate SCCR marking where there are multiple control panels; that overcurrent protection is required for servo drives; and that conveyors, conveying machines, and material handling machines are within the scope of NFPA 79.

As always, users of this standard are encouraged to submit public input to improve the standard as we go forward with the new 2018 edition of NFPA 79, *Electrical Standard for Industrial Machinery*.

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