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SENATE BILL NO. 279

Offered January 14, 2026

Prefiled January 13, 2026

A BILL to amend the Code of Virginia by adding sections numbered 54.1-1129.2 through 54.1-1129.5, relating to Department of Professional and Occupational Regulation; Board for Contractors; tradesman apprenticeship requirements.

Patron—Craig

Referred to Committee on General Laws and Technology

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:**1. That the Code of Virginia is amended by adding sections numbered 54.1-1129.2 through 54.1-1129.5 as follows:****§ 54.1-1129.2. Tradesman apprenticeship requirements, generally.**

A. Any individual performing plumbing, heating, ventilation, and air conditioning, or electrical work for the purpose of qualifying for licensure shall hold an apprentice license issued by the Board for Contractors.

B. An apprentice licensee shall perform work only under the supervision of a licensed journeyman or master as applicable to the trade, in accordance with supervision standards established by the Board.

C. Apprentice licensees shall receive education or training in trade relevant safety, code, and regulatory requirements. Such education or training shall be competency-based and may be satisfied through any combination of supervised on-the-job training, employer provided instruction, trade or technical school programs, union or non-union training programs, online instruction, or other Board approved instructional methods.

D. The Board shall establish competency-based standards for required subject matter and shall not mandate a specific instructional format, classroom attendance requirement, or training provider, provided the apprentice demonstrates knowledge and proficiency in required areas prior to licensure.

E. Verified practical experience accumulated under supervision shall be documented and credited toward licensure in accordance with trade specific requirements established under this chapter.

F. Examinations required for licensure shall not be waived under any pathway authorized by this chapter.

G. The Board shall establish safeguards to prevent fraud and protect public safety, including documentation standards, audit authority, supervision ratios, and civil penalties for false statements or misrepresentation.

§ 54.1-1129.3. Plumbing tradesman apprenticeship requirements.

A. In addition to the general requirements of this chapter, apprentice and journeyman plumbers shall demonstrate competency in:

1. Virginia and local plumbing codes;
2. Health and sanitation standards;
3. Cross connection control and backflow prevention;
4. Gas piping and fuel gas safety; and
5. Water supply protection and waste disposal.

B. An applicant for journeyman plumber licensure may qualify through a verified experience pathway if the applicant:

1. Holds or has held an apprentice plumber license;
2. Has completed a minimum of four years of combined supervised practical experience and competency-based education;
3. Submits verifiable documentation of experience acceptable to the Board;
4. Successfully completes all required education or training prior to examination; and
5. Passes the journeyman plumber examination.

C. An applicant meeting the requirements of this section shall not be required to restart or repeat an apprenticeship solely due to the timing or absence of prior apprentice registration, provided all experience is verified and supervised.

§ 54.1-1129.4. Heating, ventilation, and air conditioning tradesman apprenticeship requirements.

A. In addition to the general requirements of this chapter, apprentice and journeyman HVAC licensees shall demonstrate competency in:

1. Mechanical and fuel gas codes;
2. Combustion safety and ventilation;
3. Refrigeration systems and refrigerant handling; and
4. Indoor air quality and system controls.

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SB279

59 *B. An applicant for journeyman HVAC licensure shall hold any federally required certifications,*
60 *including EPA Section 608 certification, prior to licensure.*

61 *C. Verified experience credit shall require supervised work on HVAC systems and documented exposure*
62 *to installation, maintenance, and service functions.*

63 *D. An applicant meeting the requirements of this section shall not be required to restart or repeat an*
64 *apprenticeship solely due to the timing of apprentice registration, provided all experience is verified,*
65 *supervised, and competency based.*

66 **§ 54.1-1129.5. Electrical tradesman apprenticeship requirements.**

67 *A. In addition to the general requirements of this chapter, apprentice and journeyman electricians shall*
68 *demonstrate competency in:*

69 *1. The National Electrical Code as adopted by the Commonwealth;*

70 *2. Electrical theory, grounding, bonding, and fault protection; and*

71 *3. Fire prevention and life safety systems.*

72 *B. Apprentice electricians shall not perform energized electrical work except under direct supervision, as*
73 *defined by Board regulation.*

74 *C. The Board shall establish tiered supervision requirements for electrical work based on voltage, system*
75 *complexity, and risk to public safety.*

76 *D. Verified experience credit for electrical licensure shall be subject to stricter documentation and*
77 *supervision requirements than other trades and shall include demonstrated competency in code compliance*
78 *and hazard mitigation.*

79 *E. An applicant meeting the requirements of this section shall not be required to restart or repeat an*
80 *apprenticeship solely due to the timing of apprentice registration, provided all experience is verified,*
81 *supervised, and competency-based.*

82 **2. That the Board for Contractors shall promulgate regulations to implement the provisions of this act**
83 **to be effective within 280 days of its enactment.**