



Wiring Procedure for Hidden Lake Condominiums

Winter/Spring 2015

Our aluminum/copper pigtail project is well underway. Over a dozen units have been completed, and we are gearing up to start doing “industrial production”, completing a half dozen or more units per week. With roughly 100 units left to do, even at that pace it will take several months to complete the task.

We appreciate those who have stepped up and completed the task. The present aluminum wiring is a fire hazard, and insurance companies are no longer willing to assume the risk. We have already had significant increases in our insurance rates, and we were only able to obtain those rates on the promise that we would upgrade our wiring. If it is not done within the next six months, our rates will go up by several hundred dollars per unit. Both for safety and financial considerations, this upgrade must happen.

For additional background on aluminum wire issues, please see the letter sent to unit owners last November. It is linked on our website, <http://myhiddenlake.com>.

What needs to be done

All devices within all the units must be upgraded so that aluminum wire does not connect directly to the device. Instead, an AlumiConn™ connector will be used to attach a short copper wire to the aluminum wire, and the copper wire will be attached to the device. A “device” is an outlet, switch, fixture or bathroom fan.

Who can do it?

THIS IS NOT A DO-IT-YOURSELF PROJECT. AlumiConn connectors require precise torque settings. Too loose or too tight, and they can either work loose over time, or break the aluminum wire. The insurance companies are requiring that a licensed, insured electrical contractor do the work. The insurers are requiring that the HOA obtain and keep on file a signed letter on the electrician’s company letterhead (or a letterheaded receipt) stating the electrician’s license and insurance number, and certifying that all devices in the unit have been upgraded to properly installed AlumiConn connectors and copper pigtails. This certification must be signed by the electrician.

Does the HOA have preferred electricians?

The HOA preferred provider is Pace Electric, out of Layton, Utah. They did this exact upgrade on a subdivision near Ogden, and they provided us significantly lower prices than we got from other bidders.

Besides price, they have other advantages:

They have done this before. AlumiConn experience is not common.

They use torque screwdrivers (which are quite expensive for a screwdriver) to set the connectors.

They bring in a crew of people, so the entire unit can be done in half a day. If you wish to take off work to be present when they do the work, you won't have to take off more than a day. Also, unit owners often feel more secure having a crew present rather than a single electrician. That is a matter of personal preference.

Pace's bid is \$11 labor per device and there are approximately 60 to 65 devices in a unit. The unit owner will supply the connectors. There is information on how to get connectors later in this letter.

The HOA will be managing a supply of connectors. This lowered the bids considerably, because the connectors are expensive, and none of the electricians were willing to pay for inventory up front without a pretty hefty charge, so the HOA will manage the inventory. This will save several hundred dollars per unit, but it will mean extra work for the Board, the property management company, and the unit owners.

There is another electrician who has worked as a private contractor with various owners at Hidden Lake residents over the years. Matt charges by the hour rather than by the device. His fee is \$40 per hour, and he primarily works evenings and weekends, or when his "day job" is slow. It normally takes multiple visits for him to complete a unit. The cost is quite close to the cost with Pace Electric. We have already had units done by Matt Bjarnson, and by Pace Electric, and the owners have been pleased with the work.

You may use another electrician, keeping in mind that they must be licensed electricians, and insured, and the HOA will need that signed letter certifying their work. Without the letter, the unit owner will have to pay for an inspection by a qualified, insured electrician who will provide a letter certifying the work. We strongly recommend using one of our preferred providers, which so far consists of Pace Electric, or Matt Bjarnson. Other people may be added later on.

How Do I schedule the electricians.

The Board and Earthwork will manage scheduling for Pace Electric.

Call 801-262-6606 and leave if a message if no answer, and we will call back and schedule a time. Pace would like to work 3 days a week here, Monday to Wednesday one week, and Wednesday to Friday the alternate weeks. They plan to do two units per day.

If you wish to use Matt Bjarnson, you will make scheduling arrangements with him directly. His contact information is:

Matt Bjarnson, C: 801-915-2212

How do I get connectors?

It has been taking approximately 140 connectors per unit. They are about \$2.80 per connector. So far, people have been buying their own connectors, and then selling any leftovers to others who are doing their upgrade. That is not going to work as the work nears completion, so rather than expect homeowners to have to sell their own extras, the HOA will sell connectors to the unit owners and buy back the extras when the unit is complete and the unit owner has returned the extra connectors and given the HOA the letter from the contractor certifying that the work has been done.

The HOA will sign out to the unit owner or his/her electrical contractor 200 prepackaged connectors, 50 3-lug connectors and 150 2-lug connectors. That will be more than enough to do the job.

When the job is done and the letter/receipt from the electrician has been obtained, bring back the extras, and they will be signed back in, and credited to your account.

If the unit owner pays for the connectors used at that time, they will simply be charged for the cost of the connectors, and no entry will even be made on their financial account at Earthwork. We will still keep the sign-out, sign-in receipt, and the unit owner can have a copy.

If payment cannot be made when the extras are turned in, there will be a \$0.20 surcharge per connector (about \$25 total), and the cost of the connectors and surcharge will be added to your account. If it is not all paid off at the next billing cycle, it will be charged interest and late fees at the same rate as any other unpaid charges on your account.

We would prefer that you paid for the connectors by check as soon as you bring back the extras. We are not in the business of being bankers, and frankly we need the money back ASAP so we can use it to buy more connectors for other units.

How and when do I pay for the work?

As per our CC&Rs, the unit owner owns all the wiring from the main breaker box, including the wire in all interior and exterior walls. That means the unit owner is financially responsible for the cost of the wiring upgrade. Contractors generally want half payment in advance and full payment when the work is completed. In our particular situation, the contractor will likely not be willing to sign a certification letter until the bill is paid.

Again, banking is not our business, and our terms for unpaid charges on your account are not very favorable. You would be better off getting the funds to pay for this upgrade from other sources.

The board chose not to increase homeowner dues this year specifically because we knew unit owners would be bearing the cost of this upgrade, which is more than enough financial pain for one year. We realize this will be a significant hardship for some of the owners, but we really see no better alternative. It is either pay the electrician or pay the insurance company. We are doing all we can to keep costs down, but at the end of the day, the work will need to be done. If there are unit owners who cannot or will not have the work done, the Board will take what legal action is permitted by the CC&Rs to have the work done, as both a safety and financial issue.

When having the work done, move furniture away from walls

Any outlets or switches that are behind furniture needs to be accessible. Light fixtures above large pieces of furniture also need to be accessible. The electricians will not move furniture. They don't want to be liable if anything breaks. If you have family or friends who can help you with furniture, the property management company would prefer not to be involved. If a unit owner absolutely needs help with moving furniture, schedule it well in advance with Ken at the office, and it will be done at a charge of \$50 per hour total for 2 people, charged in 15 minute increments. All the needed furniture can typically be moved out in 15 minutes, and moved back in another 15 minutes.

Remove all books, keepsakes, dishes, etc from furniture. This should apply no matter who moves it, especially for heavy furniture pieces, and also to protect your belongings when the electricians are working. Elbows hit things.

Additional electrical work

If you want to replace switches and outlets with similar switches and outlets, that can probably be done at no charge. If you are replacing light fixtures, that will require slightly more labor in most cases, so Pace may charge more for the extra time involved. If you are paying by the hour, of course, the extra charge is automatically included.

If your unit has can lights, they may have cooked the wires above them enough that they need to be replaced. If they can be reused, they will be, but sometimes the wire and/or insulation is too brittle to reuse. A new can light typically costs about \$25 for parts and labor.

We will need to update this information, and plan to do it by email and our web site, which is both faster and far cheaper. We will still phone or write those who do not have email access.

Thank you for your attention and cooperation,
Hidden Lake HOA Board