

Building & Mechanical

HVAC · Plumbing · Electrical · Solar & Storage · Commercial Refrigeration

Five trades, one publication. Every item is something that moves a number on your P&L, changes what you must do by law, or changes what parts and labor cost you.

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	SOLAR & STORAGE Commerce set final antidumping and countervailing duties on solar cells from India, Indonesia and Laos on September 11, with combined rates running from 147% to 268%.	COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION New supermarket refrigeration systems face a 1,400 GWP interim ceiling from January 1, 2027, the next federal date still standing after this summer's rollback fight.	BACKGROUND SIGNAL The fraud that reads your invoices before it sends one	

SUPPLY

Canada's retaliatory tariffs on roughly \$27.6 billion of U.S. goods took effect September 8, and Washington modifies its own 50% Section 338 duty list on September 15.

Canadian counter-tariffs covering about \$27.6 billion of U.S. imports - steel, appliances, agricultural equipment, pulp, paper and electronics - took effect at 12:01 a.m. on September 8, 2026. Six days later the United States amends its own Section 338 list: products move in and out of a 50% duty at 12:01 a.m. on September 15, with a further tranche on September 29.

Section 338 duties apply regardless of USMCA origin status. The list covered roughly \$20 billion of Canadian goods when it took effect in late August. The September 15 amendment adds items as far apart as cheeses (0406.90.99) and electrical lamps (9405.29.80) and removes others, including salt (2501.00.00) and fishing-rod parts. Motorcycles over 800cc face an import ban from September 29.

That sits on top of Section 232. Since April 6, 2026 the metals duty applies to the full customs value of covered articles and derivatives regardless of metal content: 50% for steel, aluminum and most copper; 25% for certain copper and selected derivatives; 15% for metal-intensive industrial and electrical grid equipment and, since June 8, residential HVAC equipment, through December 31, 2027; 10% for goods made from U.S.-smelted metal; and 0% where metal content is 15% or less.

For a mechanical contractor the exposure is indirect and immediate at the same time. Ductwork, coils, cabinets, fittings, panelboards and refrigeration cases all carry Canadian or metals content, and distributors reprice on landed cost, not on the date you signed. Any fixed-price quote written before September 8 on Canadian-sourced material is now being filled at a different number than you bid.

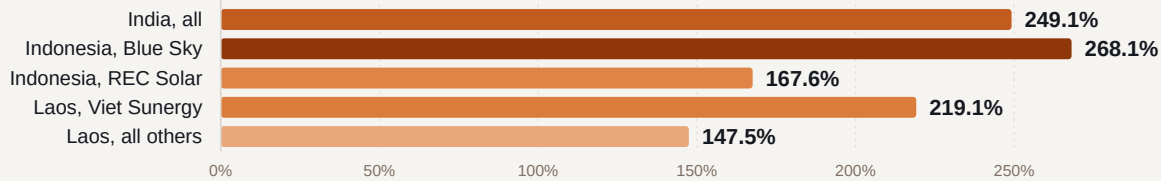
What to do about it: Pull every open quote and signed contract where material has not yet been purchased, and flag anything sourced from Canada or carrying steel, aluminum or copper content. Ask each distributor in writing this week for country of origin and the Section 232 or 338 provision they are billing under - in email, not on a phone call. Re-price anything shipping after September 15 and re-issue with a 15-day expiry. Add a tariff-adjustment clause to your standard terms, one sentence letting you pass through any duty change between bid and delivery, and have counsel confirm it survives your state's home-improvement rules. Buy forward only on the two or three line items you install every week. Finally, ask whether a product qualifies for the 10% U.S.-smelted rate or the 0% band at 15% or less metal content, and keep that declaration on file.

The Carmichael Compass, Issue 26-035, September 9, 2026 · U.S. Adjusts Section 232 Tariffs on Aluminum, Steel and Copper: Full Customs Value Now Applies (GHY, Aug 31, 2026) · U.S.-Canada Trade War Escalates as 50% Tariffs Take Effect (ACHR News)

INFOGRAPHIC 1 / SOLAR DUTY WALL

Commerce's final duties on solar cells from India, Indonesia and Laos run from 147% to 268% combined.

Combined antidumping plus countervailing duty rates, percent, from the Commerce Department final determination fact sheet dated September 11, 2026.

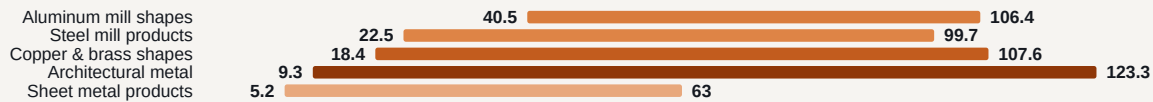


No supplier in the three countries lands below a 147% combined rate. The ITC votes October 14; if it finds injury, orders issue and these become cash deposit rates. Modules already on the water are not exempt. Get written country of origin and an entry date on every pending module order before mid-October. [Final Affirmative Determinations, AD/CVD Investigations of Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells from India, Indonesia and Laos \(U.S. Commerce, Sept 11, 2026\)](#)

INFOGRAPHIC 2 / THE METALS SQUEEZE

Metal inputs have risen far faster than the fabricated products mechanical contractors actually sell.

Producer price change, percent: 12 months to July 2026 (low) versus change since February 2020 (high). AGC analysis of federal producer price data, published August 13, 2026.



Raw metal is up 18% to 41% in a year; the fabricated sheet metal you sell is up 5.2%. That gap comes out of gross margin on every fixed-price job. Nonresidential construction inputs rose 7.1% and construction wages 3.5% over the same period. Quote fabrication labor and material separately on anything priced beyond 60 days. [7 Numbers That Show How Inflation is Squeezing Sheet Metal Contractors \(ACHR News, Aug 13, 2026\)](#)

HVAC

TWO ITEMS

MONEY

Five HVAC and piping manufacturers posted September price increases of 5% to 15%, with OmegaFlex, Bard and Jones Stephens all effective in the first three days of the month.

Why it matters: The ACHR News price-increase list published September 2, 2026 shows OmegaFlex raising TracPipe 6% on September 1, Bard raising service parts the same day, Jones Stephens taking 5% to 15% by product line on September 3, and M&M Manufacturing and Snappy raising up to 6% on September 21. These are list increases on flex gas piping, fittings and sheet metal accessories - parts that ride on a service truck and get billed at a marked-up flat rate, so the margin loss is invisible until quarter end. Re-check your flat-rate book against the new sheets before the September 21 dates land, and pull forward stocking orders on TracPipe and duct accessories you turn weekly.

[HVAC Price Increase List: September 2026 \(ACHR News, Sept 2, 2026\)](#)

REGULATION

Higher-GWP VRF equipment manufactured before January 1, 2026 must be installed by January 1, 2027, leaving about 15 weeks to place any remaining R-410A VRF stock.

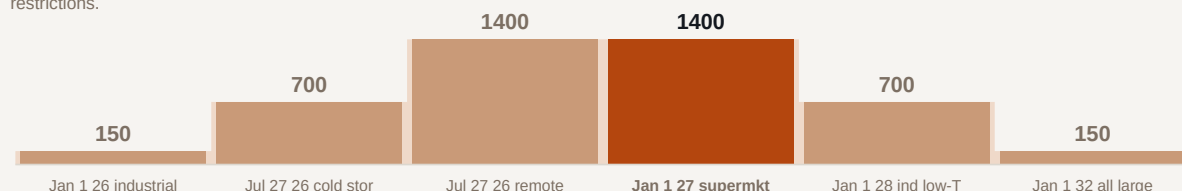
Why it matters: EPA's December 2024 Technology Transitions rule for variable refrigerant flow systems allows HFC equipment manufactured before January 1, 2026 to be installed through January 1, 2027. The deadline extends to January 1, 2028 only where the building permit was issued before October 5, 2023. After the cutoff the equipment cannot lawfully be installed as new, and a distributor still holding it will discount hard or push it onto your yard. Inventory every VRF outdoor unit and branch controller you own this week, confirm the manufacture date on the nameplate, and either schedule the installation before January 1 or return it under stock rotation now, while the distributor still has an outlet.

[Regulatory Actions for Technology Transitions \(U.S. EPA\)](#)

INFOGRAPHIC 3 / THE GWP CLOCK

Federal refrigerant ceilings land on one refrigeration sector at a time between now and 2032.

Interim and final global warming potential limits taking effect on each date, by sector, under EPA's Technology Transitions restrictions.



The next date that costs money is January 1, 2027, when new supermarket systems must come in at or below 1,400 GWP, ruling out R-404A and R-507A racks. Cold storage and remote condensing units have sat at 700 and 1,400 since July 27, 2026. The 2032 step down to 150 applies to new installations, not to racks already in the ground. [Technology Transitions HFC Restrictions by Sector \(U.S. EPA\)](#)

PLUMBING

TWO ITEMS

REGULATION

DOE's commercial water heater efficiency standards bind equipment manufactured from October 6, 2026, but the agency has already said it will not enforce them for a full year.

Why it matters: The standards - 95% thermal efficiency for gas-fired commercial storage water heaters and 96% for instantaneous units and hot water supply boilers - apply to equipment manufactured on or after October 6, 2026. DOE's enforcement policy dated May 5, 2026 says it will not pursue units manufactured between October 6, 2026 and October 6, 2027. Separately, a petition docketed as EERE-2026-BT-STD-0001, published April 27, 2026, asks DOE to push compliance to January 1, 2030. Nothing is settled, and manufacturers may stop building non-condensing lines anyway. Price both condensing and non-condensing options on any commercial job quoting past October, and ask your rep in writing what they will still build after October 6.

Commercial Water Heater Enforcement Policy (U.S. Department of Energy, May 5, 2026) · Energy Conservation Program: Notification of Petition for Rulemaking, EERE-2026-BT-STD-0001

DEMAND

The \$15 billion of infrastructure-law money earmarked for lead service line replacement expires September 30, 2026, weeks after EPA issued fresh inventory and access guidance.

Why it matters: EPA released new Lead and Copper Rule Improvements guidance on August 21, 2026 covering how systems assess, identify and gain access to service lines; NACo reported it on August 27. The \$15 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding for lead service line replacement expires September 30, 2026, and a Senate proposal would instead authorize \$16.5 billion for the Drinking Water State Revolving Fund over five years. Utilities must still complete baseline inventories and begin replacing lines by November 1, 2027, then finish within ten years. Call the water systems in your service territory this month and ask which have obligated their award and which are re-bidding after September 30.

U.S. EPA releases guidance for compliance with lead pipe removal requirements (NACo, Aug 27, 2026)

ELECTRICAL

TWO ITEMS

SUPPLY

From September 14, U.S. Customs rejects entry summaries for imported insulated copper conductors that do not declare the country of smelt and the country of cast.

Why it matters: CBP message CSMS 69711865, issued August 31, 2026, turns error F794 fatal on September 14. It covers HTS 8544.42.10, 8544.42.20, 8544.42.90 and 8544.49.10 - insulated conductors and cord sets fitted with connectors. Importers must file a record type 12 (54 record) giving the primary country of smelt and the country of cast, with a secondary smelt country where one applies; where it is genuinely unknown, filers may report OTH. U.S.-origin copper is exempt. Expect holds on wire containers through late September. Ask your two largest wire suppliers this week whether their brokers are already populating the smelt and cast fields, and get a written ship date before you commit to a fixed-price rough-in.

CSMS 69711865 - Copper Additional Smelt and Cast Country Detail Error Code Update (U.S. CBP, Aug 31, 2026) · CBP Issues Guidance on Section 232 Copper Smelt and Cast Reporting Requirements (Mohawk Global)

MONEY

Section 232 duties have applied to the full customs value of covered metal articles since April 6, 2026, and the 15% band for electrical grid equipment expires December 31, 2027.

Why it matters: The April 2, 2026 proclamation moved Section 232 from a metal-content basis to full customs value: 50% on steel, aluminum and most copper articles and derivatives; 25% on certain copper and selected derivatives; 15% on metal-intensive industrial and electrical grid equipment through December 31, 2027; 10% where the metal is U.S.-smelted and cast; and 0% where metal content is 15% or less. A June 1 proclamation effective June 8 cut the U.S.-origin metal threshold from 95% to 85%. What you pay for gear depends on which band the importer claimed, not on list price. Ask for the claimed HTS heading and metal-content basis on every switchgear or panelboard quote above \$10,000.

U.S. Adjusts Section 232 Tariffs on Aluminum, Steel and Copper: Full Customs Value Now Applies (GHY, Aug 31, 2026)

SOLAR & STORAGE

TWO ITEMS

REGULATION

Commerce set final antidumping and countervailing duties on solar cells from India, Indonesia and Laos on September 11, with combined rates running from 147% to 268%.

Why it matters: The Commerce fact sheet dated September 11, 2026 sets final antidumping margins of 123.04% for India, 94.36% for Indonesia and 65.43% for Laos, with countervailing duties of 126.09% for India, 73.20% to 173.70% for Indonesia and 82.03% to 153.67% for Laos. Combined, that is about 249% for India, 168% to 268% for Indonesia and 147% to 219% for Laos. The ITC votes by notation on October 14, 2026 in investigations 701-TA-772-774 and 731-TA-1756-1758; an affirmative vote triggers duty orders. If any module in your pipeline routes through those three countries, get written country of origin and an entry date on every pending order before mid-October.

Final Affirmative Determinations, AD/CVD Investigations of Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells from India, Indonesia and Laos (U.S. Commerce, Sept 11, 2026) · USITC Vote - Notational - Crystalline Silicon Photovoltaic Cells from India, Indonesia, and Laos, October 14, 2026

DEMAND

Residential battery installations fell 27% year over year in the second quarter to 657 megawatt-hours, even as total U.S. storage set a quarterly record of 20.2 gigawatt-hours.

Why it matters: SEIA's Energy Storage Market Outlook, released August 31, 2026, puts second-quarter residential battery installations at 657 MWh, down 27% from the same quarter in 2025, while utility-scale added 18.0 GWh / 6.7 GW, up 11%, and commercial and industrial added 1.8 GWh. The first half of 2026 totaled just under 31 GWh / 10.3 GW, up 23% by energy. The growth is entirely on the utility side; the homeowner market that funds a residential installer is contracting while the grid-scale market sets records. If more than half your revenue is residential battery attachment work, bid commercial and utility subcontract scopes this quarter, not next.

Energy Storage Market Outlook Q3 2026 (SEIA, Aug 31, 2026)

REGULATION

New supermarket refrigeration systems face a 1,400 GWP interim ceiling from January 1, 2027, the next federal date still standing after this summer's rollback fight.

Why it matters: EPA's Technology Transitions restrictions set an interim GWP limit of 1,400 for retail food supermarket systems across all configurations on January 1, 2027, tightening to 150 for large-charge systems and 300 for small-charge and cascade systems on January 1, 2032. Remote condensing units and cold storage warehouses already sit under interim limits of 1,400 and 700 that took effect July 27, 2026. A rack you quote this month for a spring installation will be commissioned under the 1,400 cap, which rules out R-404A and R-507A. Confirm the refrigerant on every supermarket rack proposal now, and write the January 1, 2027 date into the contract so a slipped schedule is not your liability.

Technology Transitions HFC Restrictions by Sector (U.S. EPA)

SUPPLY

Propane charge limits in self-contained commercial refrigeration have risen to between 300 and 500 grams, widening the R-290 option as HFC allowances tighten toward 2029.

Why it matters: ACHR News reported on August 19, 2026 that safety-standard changes have raised allowable R-290 charges in self-contained equipment from 150 grams to 300 grams for closed units and 500 grams for open units, depending on design. R-290 has a GWP of 3, against 239 for R-454A and 146 for R-455A, and EPA has exempted R-290, R-600a and R-441A from the venting prohibition in specified applications. That takes a whole class of reach-ins, beverage coolers and ice machines out of the HFC phasedown and off the refrigerant price curve. Ask case suppliers for R-290 model numbers and technician training requirements before you quote the next self-contained replacement.

A2Ls or R-290? Understanding the Tradeoffs (ACHR News, Aug 19, 2026) · Regulatory Updates: Section 608 Refrigerant Management Regulations (U.S. EPA)

THE BACKGROUND SIGNAL

The fraud that reads your invoices before it sends one

The FBI's Internet Crime Complaint Center took 24,768 business email compromise reports in 2025, with losses of \$3.05 billion — a record, after dipping to \$2.77 billion in 2024 from \$2.95 billion in 2023. Across all internet crime it logged 1,008,597 complaints and \$20.88 billion in losses. Reported cases only, so read it as a floor.

Business email compromise, not ransomware, is the one that should concern a mechanical contractor. Someone gets into a mailbox, reads until they understand how you invoice and who pays you, then sends a real-looking progress billing with different bank details. No malware, no warning — just a payment that never arrives and an argument about who eats it. A trade that emails quotes, change orders and supplier invoices all day is the shape this is built for. The quieter number is adoption: under 20% of firms with fewer than 20 staff use AI at all.

What to do about it: You don't need a security program. You need multi-factor authentication on email and your accounting login, and one rule everybody follows: nobody changes bank details on the strength of an email or a call — you ring the number you already had on file and confirm. That covers most of it, and costs nothing. The part it doesn't — how the systems are set up — is the day job of our parent company, CyberSainya.

FBI Internet Crime Complaint Center, 2025 Internet Crime Report — reported cases only, rounded from \$2,946,830,270, \$2,770,151,146 and \$3,046,598,558. U.S. Census Bureau, Business Trends and Outlook Survey, May 3, 2026.

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More leads answered, more jobs booked, more revenue.

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Inbound text
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Web / ad
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Capture every lead

Answers, qualifies, books — around the clock

Answers every call & text, 24/7

Qualifies & captures the job

Live warm transfer to you

Books onto your calendar

Instant text-back to callers

Custom intake questions

Spam & robocall screening

Call recordings + transcripts

Booking reminders

Review requests

Pushes every lead to your other tools, in real time

Emergency escalation to cell

Bilingual (on request)

Multi-location

Outbound campaigns

Monthly ROI report

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Reception \$209 · Growth \$439 · Full Engine \$899 /mo

CERNO · DEAL DESK · LIVE

Close every deal

Turns the call into a priced quote that books itself

AI drafts the estimate from YOUR price book

Itemized good / better / best options

You approve from your phone

Customer page: options, photos, plain English

Accept → book a time window

Automatic follow-up until booked

Tech photo line (techs text photos in)

Financing & maintenance-plan display

Shared job room (AI, tech, owner, customer)

Works with your stack or standalone

"From first call to booked job."

Deal Desk \$149 · Pro \$249 · Bundle +\$100 /mo

Booked, paid job

The lead becomes revenue

SEEN IN YOUR DASHBOARD

2 SEE EVERYTHING — YOUR DASHBOARDS

CERNODESK · OWNER DASHBOARD

ANSWERED
312

BOOKED
88

CAPTURED
124

MISSED
0

example view - this month

47 calls caught after hours — a 9-to-5 desk would have missed them

CERNO DEAL DESK · OWNER DASHBOARD

OPEN
12

AWAITING
4

SENT
18

WON
71

example view - this month

6 min average from request to quote sent · 71% estimate → won

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