

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.

IN THIS ISSUE	HVAC Washington's Department of Ecology says its 750-GWP limit on newly installed air conditioning still binds, despite EPA dropping the federal R-410A installation deadline.	PLUMBING Colorado's Plumbing Board approved IAPMO's Water Demand Calculator on August 14 as an alternate standard for sizing water supply piping, available for statewide use immediately.	ELECTRICAL Commerce has proposed pulling insulated electric conductor cable and heat-exchanger parts into Section 232 at 25%; comments closed August 27 and no effective date is published.	 Read it online This issue, and every one before it
	SOLAR & STORAGE Commerce's final countervailing duty on Laotian solar cells, published September 16, sets 82.03% for all others and 153.67% for VSUN, and suspends liquidation back to November 28, 2025.	COMMERCIAL REFRIGERATION From January 1, 2027, EPA bars listed high-GWP refrigerants in newly installed remote commercial ice machines and remote food-processing equipment, and caps data center cooling at 700 GWP.	BACKGROUND SIGNAL The fraud that reads your invoices before it sends one	

RULE

NFPA's code panel deadlocked 10-10 on a two-year delay, so the September 1 GFCI requirement for outdoor HVAC equipment stands while ACCA and AHRI appeal.

NFPA's National Electrical Code panel voted 10-10 on technical merit and rejected Tentative Interim Amendment 1924, which sought to extend the HVAC exception in NEC 210.8(F) from September 1, 2026 to September 1, 2028. The exception let listed HVAC equipment skip GFCI protection and expired September 1, so the requirement now applies wherever the code is enforced without an amendment.

ACCA published its appeal to the NFPA Standards Council on September 25, asking it to approve the amendment and grant a hearing. It says questions remain on equipment compatibility, nuisance tripping and product availability, and wants field and laboratory testing on inverter-driven and single-stage units. Contracting Business reports that 90% of 30 public comments backed the extension.

Enforcement is uneven. ACCA says states and localities have modified, delayed or deleted 210.8(F). HARDI's July 15 list shows Virginia and Maryland amended their codes to exempt HVAC equipment and D.C. uses a pre-2020 NEC, so the same condenser swap can be treated differently across a state line. ACCA's post gives no hearing or ruling date.

The risk sits with the installer. A GFCI that trips reads to the customer as a dead system, and the callback is unbilled truck time unless your paperwork says otherwise. HARDI advises sourcing high-frequency GFCIs listed to UL 943C, while ACCA says those devices have not been field-tested across a full cooling season.

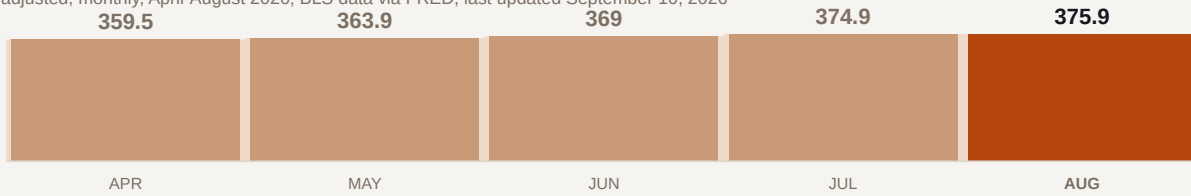
What to do about it: Call the building department in each county where you set outdoor units and ask in writing whether 210.8(F) is enforced, including on permits already open. Add a line to proposals and work orders saying GFCI protection is required where the code is enforced and that nuisance-trip callbacks on a protected unit are billable. Ask your distributor which UL 943C high-frequency GFCIs each equipment maker approves for each model before you stock any, and file the answer with the job. Confirm your electrician or subcontractor is pulling the permit, tell customers in writing before install, and re-check once the Standards Council rules.

ACCA HVAC Blog: appeal on GFCI tripping (Sept. 25) · Contracting Business: ACCA, AHRI appeal (Sept. 28) · HARDI: outdoor HVAC GFCI requirements (July 15)

INFOGRAPHIC 1 / MATERIALS INDEX

The federal construction materials price index has risen every month since April, reaching 375.9 in August.

Producer Price Index by Commodity: Special Indexes: Construction Materials (WPUSI012011), index 1982=100, not seasonally adjusted, monthly, April-August 2026; BLS data via FRED, last updated September 10, 2026



The index climbed from 359.5 in April to 375.9 in August, about 4.6% in four months, with no down month. It measures what materials cost to buy, not what you bid. If proposals written in the spring have not moved with it, the difference comes out of margin. Ask suppliers which index their surcharges follow. [FRED](#) / [BLS: PPI construction materials index](#)

HVAC

TWO ITEMS

REGULATION

Washington's Department of Ecology says its 750-GWP limit on newly installed air conditioning still binds, despite EPA dropping the federal R-410A installation deadline.

Why it matters: Since January 1, 2026, newly installed residential and nonresidential air conditioning in Washington must use refrigerant below 750 GWP, which rules out R-410A. EPA's revised technology transitions rule lets eligible pre-2025 R-410A equipment be installed until stock runs out, but state officials said on September 25 they are not currently planning to align. R-410A inventory you can place in most states you cannot place there. Washington also runs a refrigerant management program: systems with 50 pounds or more in a single circuit and refrigerant at 150 GWP or above must repair leaks within 14 days of discovery, with extensions to 45 or 120 days, and keep records five years.

[ACHR News: Washington State HFC Rules Still Apply Despite EPA R-410A Extension \(Sept 25, 2026\)](#) · [EPA: Technology Transitions HFC Restrictions by Sector](#)

DEMAND

Carrier now puts the U.S. residential HVAC market near 7.5 million units this year, above its own 6.5-to-7-million expectation but well below 9.2 million in 2024.

Why it matters: ACHR reported on September 18 that Carrier lifted its read on the residential market to roughly 7.5 million units against an earlier 6.5 to 7 million, with 9.2 million as the 2024 baseline, and that it picked up about 30 basis points of residential share. Commercial is the stronger book: global commercial HVAC orders rose more than 50% in the first half, total backlog is a record \$8 billion, and data center revenue is tracking near \$2 billion this year and at least \$3 billion next. Trane has already taken two residential increases of up to 5%, effective April 1 and July 1. Residential volume is recovering off a low base, so price is carrying revenue, not units.

[ACHR News: Price Increases Remain Part of the Residential HVAC Outlook \(Sept 18, 2026\)](#)

PLUMBING

TWO ITEMS

REGULATION

Colorado's Plumbing Board approved IAPMO's Water Demand Calculator on August 14 as an alternate standard for sizing water supply piping, available for statewide use immediately.

Why it matters: The unanimous vote makes Appendix M of the Uniform Plumbing Code usable statewide as an alternative to the fixture-unit sizing tables in Chapter 6 of Colorado's adopted plumbing code, and Contractor counts Colorado as the twelfth state to allow it, after California, Hawaii, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Oregon, Washington and Wisconsin. The method models peak demand statistically from modern fixtures instead of decades-old assumptions, which generally sizes mains and risers smaller. Smaller diameters cut copper and PEX takeoff, fitting counts, labor hours and hot-water stagnation. It is voluntary, so run it on your next multifamily bid before a competitor does.

[Contractor: IAPMO Water Demand Calculator Gains Statewide Approval in Colorado \(Aug 15, 2026\)](#) · [Water Conditioning & Purification: Colorado Approves Water Demand Calculator \(Aug 19, 2026\)](#)

MONEY

Section 301 forced-labor duties of 10% or 12.5% have applied to most imports from 60 economies since July 24, and goods already covered by Section 232 are exempt.

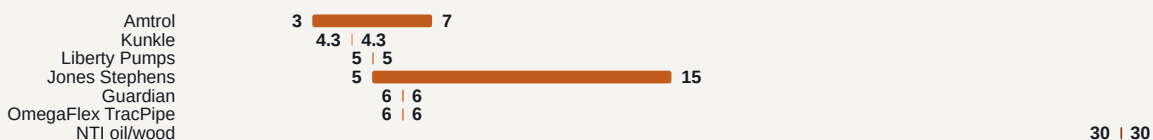
Why it matters: USTR's final notice added 10% on imports from 17 economies that have forced-labor import bans or commitments, including Canada, Mexico, India, Indonesia, Malaysia and the UK, and 12.5% on the rest, including China, Vietnam, Thailand, Brazil and Turkiye, effective 12:01 a.m. on July 24, 2026. Articles already subject to Section 232 metal duties are exempt, as are raw materials and goods without adequate domestic supply. Contractor's August 7 read puts fixtures, valves, fittings, pumps, controls and motors in scope. Price this at the part number, not the category: ask each supplier which SKUs carry the new duty and which fall under the Section 232 carve-out before you re-quote.

[USTR: Notice of Actions in Section 301 Forced Labor Investigations \(final action, July 23, 2026\)](#) · [Contractor: New Section 301 Tariffs Could Add Costs Across PHCP-PVF Supply Chains \(Aug 7, 2026\)](#)

INFOGRAPHIC 2 / SEPTEMBER PRICE SHEETS

September list-price increases across plumbing and hydronic lines ran from 3% to 30%, depending on the maker.

Announced list-price increases effective September 2026, percent, low to high by manufacturer. Supply House Times PHCP-PVF price increase roundup, September 4, 2026.



Five of the seven lines land between 4.3% and 6%, so one blended assumption will underprice the outliers. Jones Stephens spans 5% to 15% by product group, and NTI put 30% on oil and wood heating products from September 3. Reprint from each manufacturer's own letter, group by group, not from a house average. [Supply House Times: PHCP-PVF Price Increases: September 2026](#)

ELECTRICAL

TWO ITEMS

MONEY

Commerce has proposed pulling insulated electric conductor cable and heat-exchanger parts into Section 232 at 25%; comments closed August 27 and no effective date is published.

Why it matters: The Bureau of Industry and Security notice would extend Section 232 metal duties to 14 more derivative categories, among them electric conductor cables under HTSUS 8544.49.2000, 8544.49.3040, 8544.49.3080 and 8544.60.4000 at 25%, heat exchange unit parts under 8419.90.3000 at 25%, and filled steel propane, oxygen and propylene containers at 50%. Comments were due 21 days after publication on August 6. The notice sets no effective date and says nothing about how implementation will be announced, so the duty can land with little warning. Get country of origin and HTSUS codes for every cable, cord set and flex you stock, and ask distributors in writing whether open quotes hold if these lines are added.

BIS public-inspection notice: Proposed Duties on Additional Aluminum, Steel, and Copper Derivative Articles · KPMG: BIS seeks comments on Section 232 tariffs on additional derivative articles

DEMAND

DOE announced \$1.9 billion on September 24 for 31 grid projects in 26 states, rebuilding more than 1,500 miles of line and freeing up 23 gigawatts of capacity.

Why it matters: The awards run through the Grid Resilience and Innovation Partnerships program under a Speed to Power initiative called SPARK, with recipients adding \$3.35 billion of cost share for \$5.25 billion of work. Beyond 1,500 miles of reconductored or rebuilt transmission, grid-enhancing technologies are slated for nearly 21,000 miles. This is utility transmission and distribution work, not building work, but it draws large conductor, connectors, hardware and line crews from the same regional pools you bid against. Expect longer lead times on large-gauge conductor and tighter crew availability in the 26 award states, and lock wire pricing and subcontract labor for 2027 jobs now rather than at bid time.

IED magazine: DOE Invests Nearly \$2B to Keep US Power Grids Working (Sept 24, 2026)

SOLAR & STORAGE

TWO ITEMS

SUPPLY

Commerce's final countervailing duty on Laotian solar cells, published September 16, sets 82.03% for all others and 153.67% for VSUN, and suspends liquidation back to November 28, 2025.

Why it matters: The Federal Register notice of September 16 finalized subsidy rates of 82.03% for Solarspace Technology (Laos) and for all other producers and exporters, and 153.67% for Vietnam Sunergy on adverse facts available. Critical circumstances were affirmative for VSUN and all others, so suspension of liquidation reaches 90 days before the preliminary determination, to November 28, 2025; for Solarspace the finding was negative and suspension begins February 26, 2026. The ITC must vote on injury within 45 days, and a negative vote terminates the case and refunds deposits. If modules you bought after late November 2025 came through Laos, confirm this week who your purchase contract names as importer of record.

Federal Register (govinfo), Sept 16, 2026: Crystalline Silicon PV Cells from Laos, Final Affirmative CVD Determination

DEMAND

A federal judge vacated EPA's termination of the \$7 billion Solar for All program on September 18, ordering the agency to keep administering grants it had already obligated.

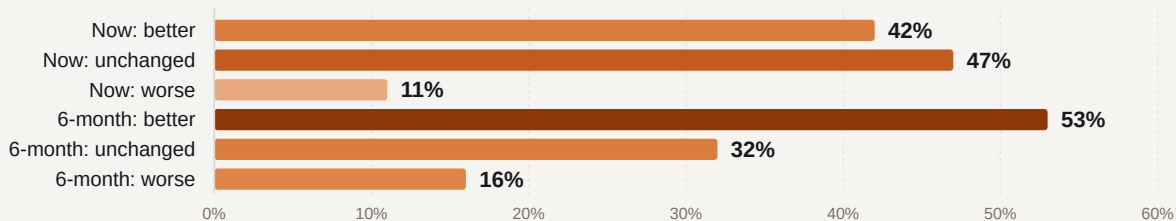
Why it matters: Judge Mary McElroy of the U.S. District Court for the District of Rhode Island held that the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, signed July 4, 2025, gave EPA no discretion to end already-obligated grants, writing that Congress's clear intent was that EPA continue to administer them. The \$7 billion sits inside the \$27 billion Greenhouse Gas Reduction Fund; the awards were obligated by the September 2024 deadline and are available for five years. Residential installers who bid into a state Solar for All program should call the state energy office or grantee now for a restart schedule, and should not book the revenue or hire against it until any appeal is resolved.

Utility Dive: Federal judge restores \$7B Solar for All program, says EPA illegally axed it (Sept 21, 2026)

INFOGRAPHIC 3 / WHO SEES IT BETTER

Electrical manufacturers reporting better current conditions outnumber those reporting worse by nearly four to one.

Share of survey respondents, percent. NEMA Electroindustry Business Confidence Index for August 2026, reported September 16, 2026.



The current-conditions index read 65.8 in August, up from 63.0 in July, while the six-month outlook fell to 68.4 from 73.9. Respondents credit grid and data center orders and blame policy uncertainty for the softer forward view. Both readings sit above 50, so distributor order books should hold through the fourth quarter. [inside.lighting: Electrical Manufacturers See Stronger Business Conditions \(NEMA EBCI, Sept 16, 2026\)](#)

REGULATION

From January 1, 2027, EPA bars listed high-GWP refrigerants in newly installed remote commercial ice machines and remote food-processing equipment, and caps data center cooling at 700 GWP.

Why it matters: EPA's sector table, last updated August 28, puts three separate January 1, 2027 installation dates in front of refrigeration contractors: remote commercial ice machines and remote refrigerated food-processing equipment lose specific high-GWP refrigerants, data center cooling drops to a 700 GWP ceiling, and supermarket systems fall to 1,400 GWP. Industrial process refrigeration above minus 30 Celsius is already at 150 GWP for charges of 200 pounds or more and 300 GWP below that. The date attaches to installation, not manufacture, so equipment still crated on January 1 is stranded. Put a firm install date in writing on every ice machine and food-processing order you place this quarter.

EPA: Technology Transitions HFC Restrictions by Sector (updated Aug 28, 2026)

SUPPLY

A2L installations now turn on ASHRAE 15.2: ducted equipment needs a refrigerant detection system, and only systems charged with four pounds or less are exempt.

Why it matters: Contracting Business set out on September 10 what A2L compliance actually costs to install. Equipment with duct connections must carry a refrigerant detection system that shuts the unit down or ventilates the space when it senses a leak; systems holding four pounds of refrigerant or less are exempt. Total charge, isolation valves, exhaust, and the type and location of the air handler all decide whether an installation passes, and the International Building Code and International Fire Code are still being amended to match. Price the detection system, its wiring and any ventilation interlock as separate line items, and confirm with the local inspector which code edition is in force before you quote an A2L job.

Contracting Business: A2L Refrigerants Explained - R-32 and R-454B (Sept 10, 2026)

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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Everything the two desks actually do — turning a lead into a booked, paid job. [See it live at cernoglobus.com](#)

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1 THE REVENUE ENGINE

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EVERY LEAD

Phone call

Inbound text

After-hours

Web / ad

Referral

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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

"Your front desk never sleeps."

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

Read-only, branded, one-key login. Two clean views of the money.

CERNODESK · OWNER DASHBOARD

example view · this month

ANSWERED 312

BOOKED 88

CAPTURED 124

MISSED 0

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

CERNO DEAL DESK · OWNER DASHBOARD

example view · this month

OPEN 12

AWAITING 4

SENT 18

WON 71

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

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