

## Connecticut Contractor Finds Niche Demand; Forms New Division

By Stefanie Kure, Senior Associate Editor

**E**d Ingalls' story is all too familiar to many of today's electrical contractors. Owner of Newington Electric Co. in Newington, Conn., Ingalls spent more than four decades laboring to help grow the company his father founded in 1958. Then the recession hit four years ago, business dried up, and the contractor found himself struggling to stay afloat. Thanks to Mother Nature and some savvy business decisions, Newington Electric is once again flourishing despite the still lackluster economy.

"My dad started Newington Electric, which was originally named R.E. Ingalls, as a one-man operation out of his garage," says Ingalls. "I began working for him when I was 12 years old, cleaning trucks and the garage. By the time I turned 15, I was assisting him on jobs."

After graduating from high school in 1974, Ingalls worked at the family business during the day and attended technical school at night to study electrical theory, becoming one of the youngest electricians in Connecticut at the time to earn his E-2 journeyman license. Later, he went on to earn his E-1 master's and unlimited contractor's licenses.

As a result of hard work, a reputation for top-notch customer service, and an aggressive marketing campaign, which included TV, radio, and billboard advertising, Newington Electric became one of the area's leading electrical contractors, relocating from the elder Ingalls' garage to a 6,000-sq-ft facility. When his father passed away in 2000, the electrical contractor employed between 25 and 30 full-time electricians, owned 15 service vans, and had nine people working in the office. Then, the economy collapsed.

"We'd been through recessions before, but this one really crippled us," says Ingalls. "I was forced to scale back



Ed Ingalls, the second-generation owner of Newington Electric Co. in Newington, Conn., recently formed Connecticut Home Generator Systems, a division dedicated solely to the installation, maintenance, and repair of residential home generator systems.

to four electricians, two people in the office, and 12 of our vans were put up on blocks. I thought the business would never recover."

Discouraged but not defeated, Ingalls sat down and wrote out a recession plan, which included moving out of the 6,000-sq-ft headquarters to a 1,500-sq-ft industrial/commercial-type condominium nearby and stopping all advertising.

"We survived solely because of our reputation and our commercial and industrial service accounts," he notes.

In late 2010, Ingalls started seeing signs that the economy might be start-

ing to turn around, so he purchased the facility he had downsized to as well as the adjoining one.

"Around this time, electric vehicles began gaining in popularity, so I thought that would be a good business to break into and an opportunity to show our adaptability," he says.

In early 2011, Ingalls formed CT Electric Car ([www.ctelectricar.com](http://www.ctelectricar.com)), which specializes in the installation of electric vehicle chargers. Although business continued to pick up during 2011, the contractor still wanted to see his company return to its former size and regain its previous customer base. Ingalls realized

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this goal when two major weather events struck Connecticut last August and October, causing massive power outages.

"Because of Storms Irene and Alfred, we received more than 4,800 phone calls and 800 emails from Connecticut residents who were without power," he says. "We booked approximately 130 automatic standby generator system installations in September and October."

Recognizing the need for a business dedicated solely to the installation, maintenance, and repair of residential standby generator systems, Ingalls officially launched Connecticut Home Generator Systems in January of this year ([www.cthomegeneratorsystems.com](http://www.cthomegeneratorsystems.com)).

"I leased a third condominium unit to house the new division, which means Newington Electric is now operating within 6,000 sq ft again," he says. "Bet-

ter yet, all 15 of our trucks are back on the road, and we have 26 full-time electricians."

In addition, the contractor is hiring for a number of positions within the new division.

"Believe it or not, I'm having a hard time finding qualified people," he notes. "I'm looking for technicians and staff who want long-term employment, have a strong work ethic, and are willing to go the extra mile for our clients."

Like Newington Electric Co. and CT Electric Car, Connecticut Home Generator Systems is offering its customers 24-hour emergency service.

"I can't stress enough how important high-end customer service is to the success of a business, particularly in our industry," he adds. "When people call Newington Electric Co, they get a live person on the phone instead of a record-

ing. If they need same day service, we supply it. Even if they just have general electrical questions or concerns, there's someone available to speak with them. I don't know of any other electrical company in Connecticut that does this."

Ingalls credits his work ethic and tenacity to succeed to his late father, Richard Ingalls, who taught him the trade. When times get tough, the contractor falls back on his lifelong education and remembers what he learned from his father while attending what he refers to as "the University of R.E Ingalls & Son."

"For more than half my life I worked under my father's tutelage," he says. "The most important lessons he taught me were to take pride in my work, treat everyone just like you want to be treated, and remember that a man is only as good as his word."

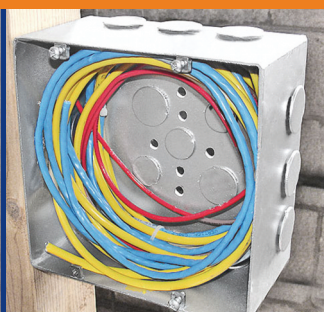
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