



RE-Wrenches Mail List Info & Etiquette

Purpose

RE-Wrenches is for experienced installing dealers of home scale renewable energy equipment (PV, wind, micro-hydro). To be used for community building, problem solving, and ongoing discussions of installation techniques, *National Electrical Code* issues, and business issues specific to our industry.

Subscription: Requires list owner's approval
Archive: Readable by anyone

To join: Join online at <http://lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org>

To unsubscribe: Click to email: re-wrenches-request@lists.re-wrenches.org?subject=unsubscribe or do it online at <http://lists.re-wrenches.org/options.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org>

To post: Send email to RE-wrenches@lists.RE-wrenches.org

To change to digest mode, temporarily suspend receiving RE-Wrenches email, or take care of other user tasks: You must log on to the RE-wrench list web site at <http://lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org> by using the information that was in your list "Welcome" message.

The Basics

You must register and submit a Wrenches Profile at www.members.re-wrenches.org (click "Register" at the top of the page). This list is a "community," and the biography profile will help others on the list contact you, find your web page, and have a better understanding of who you are and what you do.

No product marketing allowed. There are some manufacturer and distributor representatives on this list because they can often answer posed questions and they need to hear product feedback from us. But, all participants must limit discussions to topics posed by Wrenches. We do NOT want marketers including info and announcements on this list.

When you join a list, monitor the messages for a few days to get a feel for what common questions are asked, and what topics are deemed off-limits. This is commonly referred to as lurking. When you feel comfortable with the group, then start posting.

It is important to many of our list members that they not be overburdened with email. Therefore, **please keep idle chit-chat, off-topic messages, funny stuff, politics, religion, thank-yous, and other non-wrench stuff off this list.**

Keep your questions and comments relevant to the focus of renewable energy wrenching.

If another person posts a comment or question that is off our topic, do NOT reply to the list which can have the result of keeping the off-topic conversation going publicly. If you feel the need to reply to off-topic stuff, do it directly and only to that person, not to the list.

When someone posts an off-topic note, and someone else criticizes that posting, you should NOT submit a gratuitous note saying "well, I liked it and lots of people probably did as well and you guys ought to lighten up and not tell us to stick to the subject." Again, that merely perpetuates the off-topic postings.

If you have questions about what is or is not appropriate for the list, please check with the moderator before posting.

Be careful when forwarding RE-Wrench messages outside the Wrenches list, because the email may have someone's private email address in it.

Please do not post leads on the Wrenches List

1. If you get a lead you cannot handle, then either send it directly to someone you think will be interested (but not the list) or,
2. Send them a piece of email giving them reference to find someone else, like www.nabcep.org or www.homepower.com/contractors
3. It is OK to post leads on the other list, RE-Markets, if you are a member.

Here's some suggested wording for responses to email inquiries (leads), the person first receiving the contact could send the potential client a piece of email that says:

"Thanks for your interest in XXX Solar. Unfortunately, we do not do work in your geographical location. Here are some resources for you to find a reputable installing dealer near you. www.nabcep.org is a professional organization of qualified RE installers. If you do not find something suitable there, try www.homepower.com/contractors which is a larger, more loosely gathered database of companies.

If neither of those resources have what you are looking for, please email me again at the above address, and I will help you find someone to work with on your project."

But whatever you do with leads, do **not** do it on the RE-Wrenches list.

Please do not post items for sale or exchange on the Wrenches List

It has been decided that the other list, RE-Markets, is the appropriate place for that kind of posting.

Please do not ask questions of manufacturers that would be better as off-list contact to manufacturer support.

While the wrench list can be used to ask manufacturers questions, please make sure that it is relevant to everyone on the list first, and that the info cannot be had in manuals or through normal manufacturer customer support channels.

When quoting a message from another person, edit out whatever isn't directly applicable to your reply. Don't let your mail software automatically quote the entire body of messages you are replying to when it's not necessary. Take the time to edit any quotations down to the minimum necessary to provide context for your reply. Nobody likes reading a long message in quotes for the third or fourth time, only to be followed by a one line response: "Yeah, me too." This is especially onerous if everyone leaves embedded graphics in the quoted body.

Avoid forwarding or redirecting a long mail message to the list or enclosing a large file. It's preferable to reference the source of a document and provide instructions on how to obtain a copy. One good way is to place the document on your own web site and provide a link to it within the email message. If you attach a document, try to keep it under 1 MB.

Resist the temptation to "flame" others on the list. Remember that these discussions are "public" and meant for constructive exchanges. Treat the others on the list as you would want them to treat you. (A.K.A. The Silicon Rule.) If you absolutely need to chastise someone, please do it off list. Or have the moderator deal with it.

When replying to a message posted to the list, double-check the outgoing address to be certain it's going to the intended location (individual person or entire list). It can be very embarrassing to incorrectly post a personal message to the entire discussion group that was intended for an individual.

Save your subscription confirmation letter for reference. That way if you go on vacation you will have the subscription address for suspending mail.

Occasionally subscribers to the list who are not familiar with proper netiquette will submit requests to SUBSCRIBE or UNSUBSCRIBE directly to the list itself. Be tolerant of this activity, and possibly provide some useful advice (off list) as opposed to being critical. No doubt, it was an innocent mistake.

Other people on the list are not interested in your desire to be added or deleted. Any requests regarding administrative tasks such as being added or removed from a list should be made to the moderator, not the list itself.

Mailing List Etiquette FAQ

By Brian Edmonds

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There have been a number of documents written about netiquette, most of them quite good, and this FAQ will probably seem to some to be little more than a retelling of an old story. Those that I know of are listed below, and I gratefully acknowledge both their instruction and their inspiration in writing this FAQ. Primarily this is aimed towards subscribers to the mailing lists which I run personally, but I would like to think that it should apply equally to most any other list. If you run a mailing list, and would like to send new members copies, or include links to this in your list web page, please do.

How do I post to the list?

When you subscribed, you probably received an information file about the list. Included in this information is usually the mail address to which posts should be mailed. [Michael says see above for instructions.]

When replying to messages you receive from the list, you should acquaint yourself with the reply options of your mail reader. Most mail programs will have at least two reply modes: private and group. A private reply will go only to the person who sent the original message. A group reply by default will go the entire group that received the original message. You should be able to edit this list of addresses to reduce it to just the list address, plus any other people you think should receive private copies.

Please make sure that your postings have a meaningful subject line, as many people use this to help determine which posts to read and which to ignore when they're operating under time constraints. If you're replying to a message and the topic of your reply is drifting from the original subject, then before sending, edit it to reflect the new subject matter. A common convention is to change a subject of "Wilma's hair" to "Betty's hair (was Wilma's hair)" when you do this to provide continuity between the threads. Try to snip off any obsolete "was" bits though, or subject lines can get unmanageably long.

Finally, do not use deceptive subject lines that you think may help attract attention. It may work once or twice, but like the boy who cried wolf, if you keep wasting people's time in this way, they'll soon start ignoring your posts entirely. Honesty, clarity, and conciseness is the best policy when composing your subject line.

Is there anything I should not post to the list?

The basic rule is that as long as your post has some content related to the primary subject of the list, and does not contain off-topic material, then it is fine for the list.

Also, you should not post inflammatory (aka flame) mail to the list. It is perfectly fine to disagree with people publicly, but be careful how you do it. For example, if you think someone is lying on a subject, it may be fine to say "Betty's claims about Wilma's hair stylist are not correct," but it is over the line to say "Betty is a liar."

On the flip side, if someone posts something with which you are in particular agreement, that's great. You should not, however, follow up to the list with a post containing no more than "Me too!" or "Right on, brother!" If you have something of substance to add to the discussion, then by all means do so, but if you simply wish to express a simple agreement, then do it in private mail.

You should not post subscribe or unsubscribe requests to the list. They won't do any good there, and will do little more than annoy other subscribers (unless they're filtered out by the list server, in which case they will only annoy the list owner: not exactly a winning move either). When you subscribe to the list, you should receive a file explaining among other things, how to unsubscribe: keep this! If worst come to worst, and you really cannot figure out how to leave the list, contact the list owner and ask (politely) for help. [All Wrench list messages include unsubscription links in their headers.]

You should also not repost private email to the list unless you have obtained prior consent from the author. Such reposting is at best considered extremely rude, and in some legal jurisdictions may be a violation of copyright, or other rights of the original author.

See also the related section on binaries and other large files.

Are there any important formatting considerations?

Visual formatting is very important in a textual medium like email. If your postings are poorly formatted, they will be hard to read, and people will tire of them quickly. As a result, fewer people will read what you write, and many will begin to skip

your posts entirely.

Plain text is best, specially if you remove proprietary formatting like from Word, Outlook, Apple Mail, etc.

Be careful when using tabs for indenting, as they will display differently on other platforms. Also, avoid control characters and other fancy visual effects which are likely platform-specific.

Is properly grammer and speeling imprtnt, d00dz?

Like formatting, grammar and spelling are also very important in a textual medium. One author, whose name I have forgotten, has compared posting material containing glaring grammar and spelling mistakes with being dirty and unkempt in personal contacts. In any case, your postings reflect on you, so you should take pains to post what you can be proud of.

Also keep in mind, that with the proliferation of Internet Search indexing, it is becoming easier all the time to quickly compile a personality profile of a network user based on what he or she posts. Be aware that your friends, family, romantic interests, and employers (current and future) will all have access to this information. Again, others will judge you based on both what you say, and how you say it, so give each posting careful thought.

On the flip side, it is generally not worthwhile to publicly correct the spelling or grammar in something written by someone else. For many Internet users, English is not their first language, and even if it is, they may have disabilities which prevent them from using it as easily as others. Some people will appreciate correction, and take it as a learning experience, but it should always be done via private mail (never publicly), and you should tread carefully.

Finally, do use punctuation, and put spaces in the right places around it. Also, use capitalization properly (NO SHOUTING, please), and avoid using short forms such as dropping vowels, or substituting 4/for, u/you, r/are and so on. Such practices might make things easier for you, but it makes deciphering your writing that much harder for everyone else who you're expecting to read it. You can make an exception for smilies and common acronyms, such as OTOH, YMMV, BTW, and such, but don't overdo it, and be careful not to confuse your audience.

In short, to borrow from the informal guideline given in many Internet protocols: be conservative in what you produce and liberal in what you accept.

How long can I make my email signature?

Ideally it should be as short as possible while still getting across whatever you feel is important that it contain. The very best signature of all is probably just a single line with your name and email address. Remember that while an ASCII graphic or witty saying may be cool the first time, it's going to be boring by the time someone sees it five times, and if it's large enough to attract the eye, will get annoying very quickly.

Larger sigs are forgivable, and four lines or more is typically the norm, but mailing lists feed into a person's private mailbox. Avoid putting graphics in the signature, as dozens can remain on the computer as long as the messages are there. (I just counted 242 copies of the same XXXXXX Solar Co. graphic in my embedded files folder.)

Should I "cross-post" to multiple lists?

Almost always, the answer to this is no. Most mailing lists are topically disjoint, and there is very little that is equally appropriate for posting to a number of them. It can also be annoying, as often subscribers are on multiple lists so will get a copy of your message for each list they're on that you post to.

That said, there may be some occasional instances where it would be appropriate to post to more than one lists at once. If you think this is the case, then you should probably contact the owner of each list and make sure that they agree before proceeding.

Should I post large files to the list?

Almost always, the answer to this is no. Mail sent to mailing lists is going into subscribers' private mailboxes, some of which are not set up to handle really large pieces of mail. Typically, you should put large files up on an ftp or web site, and then post an announcement to the list with instructions on how to access the files. If you do not have access to ftp or web facilities, contact the owner of the list, and she or he may be able to help you out.

If you do need to attach a file, please keep it under 1 MB.

When replying, should I quote the previous message?

Most certainly. You should always provide some context to your replies so that people who may not have been following the thread closely, or who have other things on their minds, will easily be able to determine what you're talking about.

However, when quoting, be very careful to edit the quoted sections down to the bare minimum of text needed to maintain the context for your reply. There is very little on a mailing list that is more annoying than paging through a few pages of quoted text only to read a few lines at the end. Also be careful that you clearly indicate what text you're quoting (as opposed to what you're writing), and if possible, cite the author of the original text.

It is almost always a bad thing to include the entire text of a message being replied to, be it at the start or end of your reply.

And ALWAYS remove embedded files from quoting in messages.

Should I mail a copy to the person I'm replying to?

That depends, in general, but for the Wrench list, the answer is no.

I've been insulted! How should I respond?

Ah, congratulations. You've never been properly welcomed to the net until you've been flamed. Your response can take a number of forms. The first and most important thing you should do is to take a break and cool off. Replies written in the heat of anger are seldom any better than the postings which inspire them. Revenge is a dish best served cold, as they say. [Michael has an entire mailbox of held-back emails collected over the years. Writing a message that you know you will never send can be good for the soul.]

Now that you've cooled off, go back and consider the offending material again. If it's nothing but baseless lies and fabrications that no rational person would believe, then the best response is to completely ignore it.

If, on the other hand, the posting contains inaccuracies which you feel need to be addressed, then it is perfectly reasonable to send a follow-up message which does so. Ignore any hysteria, and stick with the facts. Be reasonable and rational, point out errors, and their attack will usually collapse around them. Avoid any personal attacks on an individual's intelligence, age, character, etc. Cultivate a reputation of being level-headed, and people will gladly give you the benefit of the doubt over a knee-jerk flamer.

The final option [but not for the Wrench list, obviously] is to flame them in return, but be very careful when deciding on this course of action. Well crafted flames are a thing of beauty, but are extremely difficult to write. The ultimate goal of a flame should be that the recipient know deep in his or her heart that they have been terribly insulted, but should not consciously be able to figure out why they feel this way.

[Wrenches, I left the above in here because it may apply to other lists you are on. But we are a tight knit community of professionals. Please do not flame anyone on the RE-Wrenches list. If you have something like that to say, send a private email to the person.]

My posting hasn't shown up on the list! What do I do?

Probably, just be patient. Sometimes the list server will be off-line, or be too busy with other things to deal with your mail right away. Also, some lists are restricted to posts by subscribers only, and if the address you post from does not match the one you're subscribed under, your posting will never show up. If the entire list or just you are on moderation, and the list owner is away or busy, then it may be some time before your message gets approved.

If 36 hours go by with no sign of your post, then the next step should be to privately write the list owner and inquire if there's a problem. Include as much information as you can regarding what your original posting was about. If still nothing has happened after a week, and if your message is still relevant, then it's probably entirely reasonable to post it again. Mail is generally reliable, but things still get lost occasionally.

I'm not getting any mail from the list! What's wrong!

Well, most likely this simply means that no one is posting anything. Do not, however, send a "test message" to the list, as it's unlikely that all the subscribers want to receive such off-topic junk. It's perfectly reasonable for a list to be dormant for periods between bursts of traffic, as not all topics can be interesting all the time.

On the other hand, it is also possible that you are no longer subscribed to the list, whether due to your mailbox bouncing for too long, or due to some other system error. The easiest way to determine if this is the case is simply to resubscribe to the list. If you're already on the list, then the list server should return a message stating as much.

I've got a problem not answered here! What do I do?

Your best resource is the list manager, michael.welch at re-wrenches.org .