



# RE-Wrenches Mail List Info & Etiquette

## Purpose

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

**Subscription:** Requires list owner's approval

**Archive:** Readable by anyone

**Created:** Oct 13, 1999

**To join:** If you qualify, join online at [lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org](https://lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org)

**To unsubscribe:** Send email to [re-wrenches-request@lists.re-wrenches.org](mailto:re-wrenches-request@lists.re-wrenches.org) with the word *unsubscribe* as the subject.

or do it online at [lists.re-wrenches.org/options.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org](https://lists.re-wrenches.org/options.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org)

**To post to list:** Send email to [RE-wrenches@lists.RE-wrenches.org](mailto: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 [lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org](https://lists.re-wrenches.org/listinfo.cgi/re-wrenches-re-wrenches.org) by using the information that was in your list "Welcome" message.

## The Basics

**Once approved, you must register and submit** a Wrenches Profile at [members.re-wrenches.org/](https://members.re-wrenches.org/) (click "Register"). This list is a "community," and the biography profile will help others 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 or sales efforts 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. When you feel comfortable with the group, then post when needed.

It is important to keep the list as useful as possible for as many as possible, so **please keep idle chit-chat, off-topic messages, funny stuff, politics, religion, sales, marketing, leads, job postings, 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. If you feel the need to reply to off-topic stuff, do it directly and only to that person, not to the list.

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 or jobs 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 the NABCEP web site.
3. Search the Wrench List biographies for someone in their vicinity.
4. 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 location. Here are some resources for you to find a reputable installing dealer near you. NABCEP.org is a certification organization that has access to certified members.

If that doesn't help, 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. 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, first make sure that it is relevant to others on the list..

**When quoting a message from another person in your response, edit out whatever isn't directly applicable to your reply, and edit out any embedded images.** 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."

**Avoid forwarding or redirecting a long mail message to the list or enclosing a large file.** There are system message size limits that will cause a message to be rejected. It's preferable to reference the source of a document with a URL and/or 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.

**Absolutely do NOT "flame" others on the list.** These discussions are "public" and meant for constructive exchanges. Treat the others on the list as you would want them to treat you. If you absolutely need to chastise someone, please do it off list. Or contact the moderator with your complaint, and let him decide how to handle 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 (person or entire list). It can be very embarrassing to incorrectly post a personal message to the entire discussion group.

**Use "Reply" rather than "Reply to all," so that nobody gets multiple copies of your reply.**

**Save your subscription confirmation letter for reference.** That way if you go on vacation or want to change other settings you will have the subscription address for suspending mail.

Any requests regarding administrative tasks such as being added or removed from a list, or ANY administrative questions, should be made to the moderator but 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. 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.

When replying to messages you receive from the list, you should acquaint yourself with the reply options of your mail software. 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 To: list of addresses to reduce it to just the list address.

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.

Do not use paragraph marks or line feeds in the Subject field.

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.

You should also not repost outside 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.

### **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.

Most importantly, learn to use the enter (or return) key on your keyboard. Don't be afraid to use blank lines to separate your paragraphs, and do break your text into paragraphs. In fact, keeping paragraphs fairly short is also easier to read; around ten lines is a good limit.

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 proper grammar and spelling important, too?**

Like formatting, grammar and spelling are also very important in a textual medium. 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 they post. Be aware that your friends, family, romantic interests, and employers (current and future) will all have access to this information. Others may 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. Remember that while a 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. If a signature contains little useful information, but is just repeated over and over, many people will quickly start to feel less favorably inclined towards your contributions to the list.

And it is preferable to not put graphics, like company logos, etc. In your signature. Those embedded files can add up fast, specially if you are a frequent poster.

### **Should I "cross-post" to multiple lists?**

Almost always, the answer to this is no. Generally, our list is a "community" that stands alone.

### **Can I post large files to the list?**

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.

[The Wrench list has message size limits, and large messages will be rejected.]

### **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, and be sure to edit out embedded graphics and mail list footers. 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.

### **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. Private copies of postings to mailing lists will often result in multiple copies arriving in the recipient's mailbox, rather than just one.

### **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 folder of held-back messages 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 it contains material that you would consider to be of a slanderous or threatening nature, then you may wish to forward a copy to the user's postmaster and/or list moderator, and request that they have a word with the individual about the proper use of the net.

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. However, the ideal approach is to ignore any hysteria, and stick with the facts. Be reasonable and rational, point out your attacker's errors, and their attack will usually collapse around them. In particular, avoid any personal attacks on an individual's intelligence, age, character, etc. At the very least, if you cultivate a reputation of being level-headed, then most people will gladly give you the benefit of the doubt over a knee-jerk flamer.

The final option [but not for the Wrench list] 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

or to the moderator.

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

Probably, just be patient. Rarely, the list server will be off-line. Make sure address you post from matches 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 you are concerned, 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.

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

Well, most likely this simply means that no one is posting anything. If you've got something to say, then post it and see if others chime in again. Do not, however, send a "test message" to the list, as it's unlikely that all the subscribers want to receive such 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 check in with the list moderator.

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

Your best resource is the list manager, [michael.welch@re-wrenches.org](mailto:michael.welch@re-wrenches.org).