Service Drop Downsizing

Andy's Question:

"Ok, I put in a 200 amp service, using 4/0 alum, but I discovered the underground service drop from consumers is only 1/0. Shouldn't I be able to downsize my side of the meter? I couldn't find it in the code book, but I think it is in there somewhere allowing me to do this, thanks"

Working Electrician:

NO……

(B) Not Covered. This Code does not cover the following:

(5) Installations under the exclusive control of an electric utility where such installations

a. Consist of service drops or service laterals, and associated metering, or

b. Are located in legally established easements, rights-of-way, or by other agreements either designated by or recognized by public service commissions, utility commissions, or other regulatory agencies having jurisdiction for such installations, or

c. Are on property owned or leased by the electric utility for the purpose of communications, metering, generation, control, transformation, transmission, or distribution of electric energy.

In the 2002 Code, 90.2(B)(5) was changed. The term associated metering was added to declare that the Code does not cover metering equipment associated with service drops and laterals. Further, the purpose of new wording added to identify access by "easements, right-of-ways, or by other agreements" associated with the authority of "public service commissions, utility commissions, or other regulatory agencies having jurisdiction" is to clarify that those agencies generally have authority over those types of installations and establish the rules that govern such installations.

It is not the intent of this section to exclude the NEC as an installation regulatory document. After all, the NEC is fully capable of being utilized for electrical installations in most cases, and 90.2(B)(5) does not pertain to areas where portions of the NEC could not be used. Rather 90.2(B)(5) lists specific areas where the nature of the installation requires specialized rules or where the use of other installation rules, standards, and guidelines has been developed for specific uses and industries. For example, the electrical utility industry uses the NESC as its primary requirement in the generation, transmission, distribution, and metering of electrical energy.