

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

BUILDING REACH CODE

What is a building reach code?

The State of California updates the building code every three years and all cities and counties must adopt this code as the minimum requirements. Cities and counties may also choose to adopt local building codes that “reach” above and beyond the State minimum. Reach codes may be adopted to provide additional health, safety, and environmental benefits such as increased energy savings and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

Why do we need these new requirements?

It is estimated that building energy accounted for 16 percent of all greenhouse gas emissions in unincorporated Napa County in 2019, totaling over 61,000 metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions, as measured in carbon dioxide equivalent (MTCO₂e). Building energy was the third largest contributor to climate change in the unincorporated area, after solid waste disposal and agriculture.

Is Napa County the first to adopt reach codes?

No. Over 80 cities and counties in California have already adopted reach codes increasing energy standards and/or requirements for all-electric homes.

How is this code different than the current building requirements?

The main changes being approved by the County to update the 2022 building code requirements are to:

- Require construction of all new single-family residences to reduce energy use by a minimum of 13 points compared to the Energy Design Rating (EDR1) for a standard home.
- Require construction of all new multiple-family residences reduce energy use by a minimum of 10 percent below the Standard Design Building.
- Require that the new construction of single-family homes and duplexes install circuits, protection, and receptacles for one electric vehicle (EV) charging station per unit.

Does the reach code apply to commercial and industrial new construction?

No. The State of California is studying the economic feasibility of increasing energy standards for commercial and industrial development. Until those studies are complete, the County cannot determine whether the requirements would be cost effective, which is a required finding by the California Energy Commission (CEC) for any city or county adopting a reach code.

Does this code require that new homes be all-electric, including heating, air conditioning, water heaters, and cooking?

No. The reach code provides incentives for new home builders to construct all-electric homes, but owners may continue to use natural gas appliances so long as they meet the minimum energy use requirements.

Where natural gas appliances are used, the electrical panel must have dedicated circuits to allow future owners the option of converting to electric appliances. In addition, construction must include a location for a future heat pump compressor unit with drainage to allow for future electric conversion.

If I want an all-electric home, can I build one under the reach code?

Yes. The reach code requires designers, builders, licensed contractors, and professionals to provide all owners with the option of installing a stationary storage battery system and/or all-electric appliances.

Are accessory dwelling units (ADUs) subject to the new reach code requirements?

The reach code does not apply if the ADU is attached to the primary home, or if it is a junior accessory dwelling unit (JADU) built within the primary home. If the ADU is free-standing and separate from the primary home, then the reach code would be required as a part of new construction.

When will the reach code go into effect?

Once adopted by the Board of Supervisors, the ordinance then has to go to the California Energy Commission (CEC) for review and approval. If approved by the CEC, the ordinance then has to be filed with the California Building Standards Council. Once all steps have been completed, then the reach code goes into effect. The anticipated effective date is January 1, 2025.

When does the reach code apply to residential additions?

No, it only applies to new residential construction.

Who will enforce the reach code?

The County Planning, Building, and Environmental Services (PBES) Department will enforce the reach code.

Are there programs to help with the cost of reach code construction?

Yes, there are a variety of programs currently available to assist homeowners, including:

- [BayREN Single Family Homeowners Program](#)
- [MCE Clean Energy Single Family Program](#)
- [BayREN Multifamily Building Enhancements Program](#)
- [MCE Clean Energy Multifamily Energy Savings Program](#)
- [BAAQMD's Clean Heating Efficiently w/ Electric Technology \(Clean HEET\) Program](#)
- [Golden State Rebates Heat Pump Water Heater Program](#)
- [Golden State Rebates Smart Thermostat](#)
- [California Energy-Smart Homes Single Family](#)
- [California Energy Smart Homes Multifamily Low-Rise/ADU Program](#)
- [Comfortably California HVAC Distributors Incentives Program:](#)
- [TECH Clean CA Heat Pump Space Conditioning Program:](#)
- [TECH Clean CA Income-qualified Heat Pump Water Heater and Electrical Upgrades Program:](#)
- [Household electrification incentives calculator from Rewiring America](#)

For more information, please visit our website at [Energy and Electrification | Napa County, CA \(countyofnapa.org\)](#), or contact Ryan Melendez at (707) 259-5969.