

Review of Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Updated January 23, 2019

This Tip explains the applicable regulations and process for disclosing potential Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Emissions. This is done as pursuant to the State Environmental Policy Act (SEPA) as part of environmental review conducted in the master use permit process.

Human activities are the most significant factor in the increase in atmospheric greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide (CO₂), over the last century. Increased GHG levels are the primary cause of human-caused climate change.

In recognition of the impacts from GHG emissions, on December 3, 2007, the Seattle City Council adopted Ordinance 122574 which requires City departments that perform environmental review under the State Environmental Policy Act to evaluate greenhouse gas emissions when reviewing permit applications for development.

Environmental Review

The environmental impacts of development proposals must be assessed per SEPA, RCW Chapter 43.21C, and the City's SEPA ordinance, *Seattle Municipal Code* Chapter 25.05. It is downloadable from www.seattle.gov/leg/clerk/ by clicking the online information services link and then scrolling down to the *Seattle Municipal Code* link. Type 25.05 into the area asking for the Code Section Number. This is required when establishing a new use or changing or expanding an existing use that meets the criteria listed in the City's SEPA ordinance.

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The green series is just one of many resources designed to help you build green and create value for your project from initial concept planning to permitting, construction and operation. To learn more, please visit www.seattle.gov/sdci.

Environmental review is part of the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) Master Use Permit process. Additional information on which projects are subject to environmental review under SEPA is included in SDCI's Tip 208. Other components/reviews may be required. If a project is required to have SEPA review, SDCI analyzes environmental impacts and, at the conclusion of the public comment period, issues an environmental threshold decision. The following are the three major types of threshold determinations:

- **Determination of Non-Significance (DNS):** No probable significant adverse environmental impacts will result from a proposal. Conditions may be imposed to mitigate adverse impacts.
- **Determination of Significance (DS):** Probable significant adverse impacts may result from a proposal and an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is required.
- **Mitigated Determination of Non-Significance (MDNS):** Changes are made to or mitigation included in a proposal prior to or after a DS that reduces or eliminates probable significant adverse impacts. No EIS is required.

GHG Emissions Disclosure

SEPA requires environmental review of certain development proposals that may have an adverse impact on the environment. If a proposed development is subject to SEPA review, the project proponent is required to complete a SEPA checklist. The checklist currently includes questions relating to air emissions from new development.

As of March 31, 2008, GHG emissions must be disclosed as part of SEPA review.

The City of Seattle provides a worksheet to help in disclosing GHG emissions on the SEPA checklist. King County created the initial release of the worksheet, and SDCI staff are continuing to work with King County to update and refine it.

The worksheet/checklist responses will help estimate the quantity of GHG emissions that will be created over the life span of a building project.

This includes emissions associated with:

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- the extraction, processing, transportation, construction and disposal of materials and landscape disturbance (embodied emissions)
- energy demands created by the development after it is completed (energy emissions)
- transportation demands created by the development after it is completed (transportation emissions)

Further Information

For more detailed information on the environmental review process, and how to disclose GHG emissions, visit the Applicant Services Center (ASC), located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave., to discuss your plans with a land use planner. You will need an appointment and a fee may apply. To contact the ASC, please call (206) 684-8850.

Access to Information

Links to electronic versions of **Codes** mentioned in this Tip are available on our website at www.seattle.gov/sdci. Paper copies of these documents are available from our Public Resource Center, located on the 20th floor of Seattle Municipal Tower at 700 Fifth Ave. in downtown Seattle, (206) 684-8467.