



Frequently Asked Questions

March 8, 2016

City of Seattle Building Tune-Up Requirement

What is the Building Tune-Up requirement?

Owners of nonresidential buildings 50,000 square feet or greater are required to tune-up building energy and water systems every five years. A tune-up includes (a) an inspection of building systems to identify operational or maintenance issues; (b) corrections to operational issues identified in the inspection that have quick paybacks; and (c) a report to the City Office of Sustainability & Environment (OSE) summarizing issues identified and actions taken.

Who is required to comply with the requirement?

Owners of nonresidential buildings that are 50,000 square feet or greater who are also required to submit Energy Benchmarking reports. Buildings may be granted an exemption from a reporting period by OSE if they meet certain criteria (see below for exemption information).

Why is the City requiring building tune-ups?

The City of Seattle has a goal to be a carbon-neutral city by 2050, which will require significant reductions to energy use and carbon pollution from buildings. The tune-up requirement is a key piece of [Seattle's Climate Action Plan](#), our roadmap to achieving carbon-neutrality, by helping ensure buildings don't use energy and water wastefully. Reducing energy and water waste helps the City save resources and move toward its goals to reduce carbon pollution.

When will the requirement go into effect?

Compliance deadlines for the tune-up requirement phase-in by building size, per the following schedule:

Building Size:	Report of Findings and Action Taken by:
200,000 square feet or greater	October 1, 2018
100,000 – 199,999 square feet	October 1, 2019
70,000 – 99,999 square feet	October 1, 2020
50,000 – 69,999 square feet	October 1, 2021

These dates indicate the deadline for the first required tune-up. Buildings then repeat this schedule every five years. For example, a building first required to comply in 2018 would be required to conduct their second tune-up and report in 2023.

What are the specific requirements for a tune-up?

Developing the tune-up requirement is a two-step process including both an ordinance and an OSE Director's Rule. The ordinance is adopted by the City Council and signed by the Mayor. It specifies the basic parameters of the legislation, including who is required to comply, a basic definition of the actions required to comply, schedules for compliance, and penalties for non-compliance. It also authorizes the OSE Director to adopt rules further detailing compliance specifications that are consistent with the ordinance. The ordinance was adopted by the City Council on March 7, 2016.



The Director's Rule will define the substantive details of the tune-up requirement, further detailing the high-level requirements adopted in the ordinance. For example, the tune-up ordinance requires building owners to report a summary of findings and operational improvements to the City after a tune-up is conducted. The OSE Director's rule will specify the detailed information that must be included in the report. The rule will be developed through the spring and is anticipated for adoption in summer of 2016.

What is the process and timeline for the Director's rule?

The draft Director's Rule is anticipated to be released for public comment during summer 2016, and finalized by fall. The process for developing and adopting the rule is anticipated as follows:

- **Rule Development (March–June)** – Technical working group and additional public meetings to gain input on tune-up specifications, qualifications for tune-up specialists, and exemptions.
- **Draft Rule Release & Public Comment (July–August)** – Draft rule developed and released for public feedback. An open house will be scheduled to gain in-person feedback on the draft rule.
- **Final Rule Release and Adoption (August–September)** – After hearing feedback on the draft rule and making any necessary revisions, a final Director's Rule will be adopted.

What does a tune-up include?

A tune-up is focused on operational improvements to energy and water efficiency. Research indicates a tune-up averages 10-15% energy savings and typically pays back in 2-3 years from utility bill savings. Examples of operational improvements include changes to thermostat set points, or adjusting lighting or irrigation schedules. Detailed specifications of what will be included in a tune-up will be established by Director's rule.

Who qualifies for an exemption from the tune-up requirement?

The adopting ordinance identifies circumstances that would qualify a building for an exemption from a single 5-year tune-up cycle, such as evidence that a building is already a high-performing building, recent work to tune-up or improve the performance of the building, or a when a tune-up is not relevant (for example, a building slated for demolition). Specific exemption criteria and additional exemptions will be set by Director's Rule.

How do I comply, and who is qualified to conduct a tune-up?

Specifications on the actions required in a tune-up and qualifications of tune-up specialists will be determined through an OSE Director's Rule in 2016.

How can I stay informed and be involved in the rulemaking process?

Please let us know if you would like to be included in our tune-ups mailing list by e-mailing NextGenEE@seattle.gov, or by contacting Christie Baumel at christie.baumel@seattle.gov. Information regarding public meetings and other opportunities to provide feedback during the Rule development process will be provided to the tune-up mailing list and posted at: <http://www.seattle.gov/environment/buildings-and-energy/energy-policy>.