



# 2015 Seattle Energy Code

2015 Washington State Energy Code as Amended by the City of Seattle

Published by



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Construction & Inspections

## 2015 Seattle Energy Code

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# PREFACE

## Introduction

Internationally, code officials recognize the need for a modern, up-to-date energy conservation code addressing the design of energy-efficient building envelopes and installation of energy-efficient mechanical, lighting and power systems through requirements emphasizing performance. The *International Energy Conservation Code*<sup>®</sup>, in this 2015 edition, is designed to meet these needs through model code regulations that will result in the optimal utilization of fossil fuel and nondepletable resources in all communities, large and small.

This code contains separate provisions for commercial buildings and for low-rise residential buildings (3 stories or less in height above grade). Each set of provisions, IECC—Commercial Provisions and IECC—Residential Provisions, is separately applied to buildings within their respective scopes. Each set of provisions is to be treated separately. Each contains a Scope and Administration chapter, a Definitions chapter, a General Requirements chapter, a chapter containing energy efficiency requirements and existing building provisions applicable to buildings within its scope.

This comprehensive energy conservation code establishes minimum regulations for energy-efficient buildings using prescriptive and performance-related provisions. It is founded on broad-based principles that make possible the use of new materials and new energy-efficient designs. This 2015 edition is fully compatible with all of the *International Codes*<sup>®</sup> (I-Codes<sup>®</sup>) published by the International Code Council (ICC)<sup>®</sup>, including: the *International Building Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Existing Building Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Fire Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Fuel Gas Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Green Construction Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Mechanical Code*<sup>®</sup>, *ICC Performance Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Plumbing Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Private Sewage Disposal Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Property Maintenance Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Residential Code*<sup>®</sup>, *International Swimming Pool and Spa Code*<sup>™</sup>, *International Wildland-Urban Interface Code*<sup>®</sup> and *International Zoning Code*<sup>®</sup>.

The *International Energy Conservation Code* provisions provide many benefits, among which is the model code development process that offers an international forum for energy professionals to discuss performance and prescriptive code requirements. This forum provides an excellent arena to debate proposed revisions. This model code also encourages international consistency in the application of provisions.

## Development

The first edition of the *International Energy Conservation Code* (1998) was based on the 1995 edition of the *Model Energy Code* promulgated by the Council of American Building Officials (CABO) and included changes approved through the CABO Code Development Procedures through 1997. CABO assigned all rights and responsibilities to the International Code Council and its three statutory members at that time, including Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). This 2015 edition presents the code as originally issued, with changes reflected in the 2000 through 2012 editions and with changes approved through the ICC Code Development Process through 2014. A new edition such as this is promulgated every 3 years.

This code is founded on principles intended to establish provisions consistent with the scope of an energy conservation code that adequately conserves energy; provisions that do not unnecessarily increase construction costs; provisions that do not restrict the use of new materials, products or methods of construction; and provisions that do not give preferential treatment to particular types or classes of materials, products or methods of construction.

## Adoption

The International Code Council maintains a copyright in all of its codes and standards. Maintaining copyright allows the ICC to fund its mission through sales of books, in both print and electronic formats. The *International Energy Conservation Code* is designed for adoption and use by jurisdictions that recognize and acknowledge the ICC's copyright in the code, and further acknowledge the substantial shared value of the public/private partnership for code development between jurisdictions and the ICC.

The ICC also recognizes the need for jurisdictions to make laws available to the public. All ICC codes and ICC standards, along with the laws of many jurisdictions, are available for free in a non-downloadable form on the ICC's website. Jurisdictions should contact the ICC at [adoptions@iccsafe.org](mailto:adoptions@iccsafe.org) to learn how to adopt and distribute laws based on the *International Energy Conservation Code* in a manner that provides necessary access, while maintaining the ICC's copyright.

## Maintenance

The *International Energy Conservation Code* is kept up to date through the review of proposed changes submitted by code enforcing officials, industry representatives, design professionals and other interested parties. Proposed changes are carefully considered through an open code development process in which all interested and affected parties may participate.

The contents of this work are subject to change through both the code development cycles and the governmental body that enacts the code into law. For more information regarding the code development process, contact the Codes and Standards Development Department of the International Code Council.

While the development procedure of the *International Energy Conservation Code* assures the highest degree of care, the ICC, its members and those participating in the development of this code do not accept any liability resulting from compliance or noncompliance with the provisions because the ICC does not have the power or authority to police or enforce compliance with the contents of this code. Only the governmental body that enacts the code into law has such authority.

## Code Development Committee Responsibilities (Letter Designations in Front of Section Numbers)

In each code development cycle, proposed changes to the code are considered at the Committee Action Hearings by the applicable International Code Development Committee. The IECC—Commercial Provisions (sections designated with a "C" prior to the section number) are primarily maintained by the Commercial Energy Code Development Committee. The IECC—Residential Provisions (sections designated with an "R" prior to the section number) are maintained by the Residential Energy Code Development Committee. This is designated in the chapter headings by a [CE] and [RE], respectively.

Maintenance responsibilities for the IECC are designated as follows:

[CE] = Commercial Energy Code Development Committee

[RE] = Residential Energy Code Development Committee

For the development of the 2018 edition of the I-Codes, there will be two groups of code development committees and they will meet in separate years. Note that these are tentative groupings.

<b>Group A Codes (Heard in 2015, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 12, 2015)</b>	<b>Group B Codes (Heard in 2016, Code Change Proposals Deadline: January 11, 2016)</b>
International Building Code –Fire Safety (Chapters 7, 8, 9, 14, 26) –Means of Egress (Chapters 10, 11, Appendix E) –General (Chapters 2-6, 12, 27-33, Appendices A, B, C, D, K)	Administrative Provisions (Chapter 1 of all codes except IRC and IECC, adminis- trative updates to currently referenced standards, and designated definitions)
International Fuel Gas Code	International Building Code –Structural (Chapters 15-25, Appendices F, G, H, I, J, L, M)
International Existing Building Code	<b>International Energy Conservation Code</b>
International Mechanical Code	International Fire Code
International Plumbing Code	International Residential Code –IRC-Building (Chapters 1-10, Appendices E, F, H, J, K, L, M, O, R, S, T, U)
International Private Sewage Disposal Code	International Wildland-Urban Interface Code
International Property Maintenance Code	
International Residential Code –IRC-Mechanical (Chapters 12-24) –IRC-Plumbing (Chapters 25-33, Appendices G, I, N, P)	
International Swimming Pool and Spa Code	
International Zoning Code	

**Note:** Proposed changes to the ICC *Performance Code* will be heard by the code development committee noted in brackets [ ] in the text of the code.

## Marginal Markings

- ➡ = Indicates where a paragraph or item has been deleted from the requirements of the 2009 *International Energy Conservation Code*.
- > = Indicates model code language deleted by the State of Washington.
- | = Indicates a technical change from the requirements of the 2012 *International Energy Conservation Code*.
- || = Indicates a State of Washington amendment has been made to the 2015 *International Energy Conservation Code*.
- \* = Indicates that text or a table has been relocated within the code.
- \*\* = Indicates that the text or table immediately following has been relocated there from elsewhere in the code.

Underlining indicates text that Seattle has added to the *Washington State Energy Code*.

Strikethrough indicates text that Seattle has deleted from the *Washington State Energy Code*.

## Italicized Terms

Selected terms set forth in Chapter 2, Definitions, are italicized where they appear in code text. Not all instances of each term are italicized. The terms selected have definitions that the user should read carefully to facilitate better understanding of the code.

## Washington State Preface

**Authority:** The *Washington State Energy Code* (Chapters 51-11C and 51-11R WAC) is adopted by the Washington State Building Code Council pursuant to Chapter 19.27A.020. This code provides a minimum level of energy efficiency, but allows flexibility in building design, construction and heating equipment efficiencies. The design of this code allows space heating equipment efficiencies to offset or substitute for building envelope thermal performance.

The 2015 *Washington State Energy Code* (WSEC) supersedes the 2012 WSEC, Chapter 51-11 WAC, as published in the *Washington State Administrative Code*.

**Code Precedence:** The State Building Code Act., Chapter 19.27 RCW, establishes the following order of precedence among the documents adopted as parts of the State Building Code:

*International Building Code*, Standards and amendments—WAC 51-50;

*International Residential Code*, Standards and amendments—WAC 51-51;

*International Mechanical Code*, Standards and amendments—WAC 51-52;

*International Fire Code*, Standards and amendments—WAC 51-54A;

*Uniform Plumbing Code*, Standards and amendments—WAC 51-56.

In the case of conflict between the duct insulation requirements of the *International Mechanical Code* and the duct insulation requirements of the Energy Code, the Energy Code, or where applicable, a local jurisdiction's energy code, shall govern.

Where, in any specific case, different sections of this Code specify different materials, methods of construction or other requirements, the most restrictive shall govern. Where there is conflict between a general requirement and a specific requirement, the specific requirement shall be applicable.

**Enforcement:** The State Building Code Act requires that each local jurisdiction enforce the State Building Code within its jurisdiction. Any jurisdiction can contract with another jurisdiction or an inspection agency to provide the mandated enforcement activities.

**Amendments to the State Building Code:** The State Building Code Council has adopted review procedures and approval criteria for local amendments. These procedures and criteria are found in Chapter 51-04 WAC. The Council has exempted from its review any amendments to the administrative provisions of the various codes.

Forms for proposing statewide amendments to the State Building Code are available from the State Building Code Council staff.

A. **Amendments of Statewide Application:** On a yearly basis the State Building Code Council will consider proposals to amend the State Building Code. Unless directed by the State Legislature, federal mandates or court order, the Council will not enter formal rulemaking until 2018 as part of its consideration of adoption of the 2018 series of codes.

Proposals to amend the State Building Code shall be made on forms provided by the Building Code Council.

Code Change Proposal Submittal Deadline: March 1st of each year, or as determined by the Building Code Council.

B. **Local Amendments:** Any jurisdiction may amend the State Building Code provided the amendments do not reduce the minimum performance standards of the codes. There are two areas where local amendments are limited or prohibited:

**Prohibited Amendments:** Residential provisions of the State Energy Code (WAC 51-11R), the ventilation and indoor air quality requirements in the IMC and IRC (WAC 51-52 and 51-51); any

provision of the *International Building Code* or *International Residential Code* affecting accessibility; and standards specifically adopted pursuant to Chapters 19.27 and 19.27A RCW cannot be amended by any local jurisdiction.

**Residential Amendments:** Amendments by local jurisdictions which affect the construction of single-family and multifamily residential buildings must be reviewed and approved by the State Building Code Council before such amendments can be enforced. The State Building Code Act provides the following definition:

**Multifamily residential building:** Common wall residential buildings that consist of four or fewer units, do not exceed two stories in height, are less than 5,000 square feet in area, and have a 1-hour fire-resistive occupancy separation between units.

Application forms for Council review of local amendments are available from the State Building Code Council Staff or can be found on our website:

Washington State Building Code Council  
Post Office Box 41449  
Olympia, Washington 98504-1449  
www.sbcc.wa.gov  
(360) 407-9280 Fax (360) 586-9088  
e-mail: sbcc@ga.wa.gov

**Effective Date:** The 2015 Washington State Energy Code, on which the Seattle Energy Code is based, was adopted by the State Building Code Council in November of 2015. The rules are effective throughout the state on July 1, 2016.

**Building Permit Fees:** The activities of the State Building Code Council are supported by permit fees collected by each city and county. Section 19.27.085 of the State Building Code Act requires that a fee of \$4.50 be imposed on each building permit issued by each city and county. In addition, a fee of \$2.00 per unit shall be imposed for each dwelling unit after the first unit, on each building containing more than one residential unit. For the purpose of this fee, WAC 365-110-035 defines building permits as any permit to construct, enlarge, alter, repair, move, improve, remove, convert or demolish any building or structure regulated by the Building Code. Exempt from the fee are plumbing, electrical, or mechanical permits, permits issued to install a mobile/manufactured home, commercial coach or factory-built structure, or permits issued pursuant to the International fire Code.

Each city and county shall remit monies collected to the state treasury quarterly. No remittance is required until a minimum of \$50.00 has accumulated.

These permit fees are the amounts current in January 2017. Such fees may be changed by the State Legislature.

**Opinions:** Only at the request of local enforcement officials, the State Building Code Council may issue interpretations/opinions of those provisions of the State Building Code created by the Council, or provisions of the model codes amended by the Council. Final interpretation authority for any specific permit resides with the local enforcement official.

## **Acknowledgement**

The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) thanks the members of the Construction Codes Advisory Board and its committees for the dedication, knowledge, and experience they generously devoted to reviewing the 2015 Seattle codes. These volunteers donated an extraordinary number of hours to this important task. SDCI and the City's elected officials rely on this commitment of time by its citizens for advice on technical matters. The City is deeply grateful for the practical perspective they provide. The City is fortunate to have the contributions of these generous people.

## **Electronic Mailing List**

If you would like to receive occasional email messages notifying you of future amendments and errata to the Seattle Energy Code and other codes, sign up for the technical codes mailing list at <http://www.seattle.gov/dpd/codesrules/codes/energy/>



# EFFECTIVE USE OF THE INTERNATIONAL ENERGY CONSERVATION CODE

The *International Energy Conservation Code* (IECC) is a model code that regulates minimum energy conservation requirements for new buildings. The IECC addresses energy conservation requirements for all aspects of energy uses in both commercial and residential construction, including heating and ventilating, lighting, water heating, and power usage for appliances and building systems.

The IECC is a design document. For example, before one constructs a building, the designer must determine the minimum insulation *R*-values and fenestration *U*-factors for the building exterior envelope. Depending on whether the building is for residential use or for commercial use, the IECC sets forth minimum requirements for exterior envelope insulation, window and door *U*-factors and SHGC ratings, duct insulation, lighting and power efficiency, and water distribution insulation.

## Arrangement and Format of the 2015 IECC

The IECC contains two separate sets of provisions—one for commercial buildings and one for residential buildings. Each set of provisions is applied separately to buildings within their scope. The IECC—Commercial Provisions apply to all buildings except for residential buildings three stories or less in height. The IECC—Residential Provisions apply to detached one- and two-family dwellings and multiple single-family dwellings as well as Group R-2, R-3 and R-4 buildings three stories or less in height. These scopes are based on the definitions of “Commercial building” and “Residential building,” respectively, in Chapter 2 of each set of provisions. Note that the IECC—Commercial Provisions therefore contain provisions for residential buildings four stories or greater in height. Each set of provisions is divided into five different parts:

Chapters	Subjects
1-2	Administration and definitions
3	Climate zones and general materials requirements
4	Energy efficiency requirements
5	Existing buildings
6	Referenced standards

The following is a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the scope and intent of the provisions of the *International Energy Conservation Code* and applies to both the commercial and residential energy provisions:

**Chapter 1 Scope and Administration.** This chapter contains provisions for the application, enforcement and administration of subsequent requirements of the code. In addition to establishing the scope of the code, Chapter 1 identifies which buildings and structures come under its purview. Chapter 1 is largely concerned with maintaining “due process of law” in enforcing the energy conservation criteria contained in the body of this code. Only through careful observation of the administrative provisions can the code official reasonably expect to demonstrate that “equal protection under the law” has been provided.

**Chapter 2 Definitions.** Chapter 2 is the repository of the definitions of terms used in the body of the code. Codes are technical documents and every word, term and punctuation mark can impact the meaning of the code text and the intended results. The code often uses terms that have a unique meaning in the code and the code meaning can differ substantially from the ordinarily understood meaning of the term as used outside of the code.

The terms defined in Chapter 2 are deemed to be of prime importance in establishing the meaning and intent of the code text. The user of the code should be familiar with and consult this chapter because the definitions are essential to the correct interpretation of the code and the user may not be aware that a term is defined.

Additional definitions regarding climate zones are found in Tables 301.3(1) and (2). These are not listed in Chapter 2.

Where understanding of a term's definition is especially key to or necessary for understanding of a particular code provision, the term is shown in *italics* wherever it appears in the code. This is true only for those terms that have a meaning that is unique to the code. In other words, the generally understood meaning of a term or phrase might not be sufficient or consistent with the meaning prescribed by the code; therefore, it is essential that the code-defined meaning be known.

Guidance regarding tense, gender and plurality of defined terms as well as guidance regarding terms not defined in this code is provided.

**Chapter 3 General Requirements.** Chapter 3 specifies the climate zones that will serve to establish the exterior design conditions. In addition, Chapter 3 provides interior design conditions that are used as a basis for assumptions in heating and cooling load calculations, and provides basic material requirements for insulation materials and fenestration materials.

Climate has a major impact on the energy use of most buildings. The code establishes many requirements such as wall and roof insulation *R*-values, window and door thermal transmittance requirement (*U*-factors) as well as provisions that affect the mechanical systems based upon the climate where the building is located. This chapter contains information that will be used to properly assign the building location into the correct climate zone and is used as the basis for establishing requirements or elimination of requirements.

**Chapter 4 Energy Efficiency.** Chapter 4 of each set of provisions contains the technical requirements for energy efficiency.

**Commercial Energy Efficiency.** Chapter 4 of the IECC—Commercial Provisions contains the energy-efficiency-related requirements for the design and construction of most types of commercial buildings and residential buildings greater than three stories in height above grade. Residential buildings, townhouses and garden apartments three stories or less in height are covered in the IECC—Residential Provisions. This chapter defines requirements for the portions of the building and building systems that impact energy use in new commercial construction and new residential construction greater than three stories in height, and promotes the effective use of energy. The provisions within the chapter promote energy efficiency in the building envelope, the heating and cooling system and the service water heating system of the building.

**Residential Energy Efficiency.** Chapter 4 of the IECC—Residential Provisions contains the energy-efficiency-related requirements for the design and construction of residential buildings regulated under this code. It should be noted that the definition of a *residential building* in this code is unique for this code. In this code, a *residential building* is a detached one- and two-family dwelling and multiple single-family dwellings as well as R-2, R-3 or R-4 buildings three stories or less in height. All other buildings, including residential buildings greater than three stories in height, are regulated by the energy conservation requirements in the IECC—Commercial Provisions. The applicable portions of a residential building must comply with the provisions within this chapter for energy efficiency. This chapter defines requirements for the portions of the building and building systems that impact energy use in new residential construction and promotes the effective use of energy. The provisions within the chapter promote energy efficiency in the building envelope, the heating and cooling system and the service water heating system of the building.

**Chapter 5 Existing Buildings.** Chapter 5 of each set of provisions contains the technical energy efficiency requirements for existing buildings. Chapter 5 provisions address the maintenance of buildings in compliance with the code as well as how additions, alterations, repairs and changes of occupancy need to be addressed from the standpoint of energy efficiency. Specific provisions are provided for historic buildings.

**Chapter 6 Referenced Standards.** The code contains numerous references to standards that are used to regulate materials and methods of construction. Chapter 6 contains a comprehensive list of all standards that are referenced in the code. The standards are part of the code to the extent of the reference to the standard. Compliance with the referenced standard is necessary for compliance with this code. By providing specifically adopted standards, the construction and installation requirements necessary for compliance with the code can be readily determined. The basis for code compliance is, therefore, established and available on an equal basis to the code official, contractor, designer and owner.

Chapter 6 is organized in a manner that makes it easy to locate specific standards. It lists all of the referenced standards, alphabetically, by acronym of the promulgating agency of the standard. Each agency's standards are then listed in either alphabetical or numeric order based upon the standard identification. The list also contains the title of the standard; the edition (date) of the standard referenced; any addenda included as part of the ICC adoption; and the section or sections of this code that reference the standard.

## Abbreviations and Notations

The following is a list of common abbreviations and units of measurement used in this code. Some of the abbreviations are for terms defined in Chapter 2. Others are terms used in various tables and text of the code.

AFUE	Annual fuel utilization efficiency
bhp	Brake horsepower (fans)
Btu	British thermal unit
Btu/h-ft <sup>2</sup>	Btu per hour per square foot
C-factor	See Chapter 2—Definitions
CDD	Cooling degree days
cfm	Cubic feet per minute
cfm/ft <sup>2</sup>	Cubic feet per minute per square foot
ci	Continuous insulation
COP	Coefficient of performance
DCV	Demand control ventilation
°C	Degrees Celsius
°F	Degrees Fahrenheit
DWHR	Drain water heat recovery
DX	Direct expansion
$E_c$	Combustion efficiency
$E_v$	Ventilation efficiency
$E_t$	Thermal efficiency
EER	Energy efficiency ratio
EF	Energy factor
ERI	Energy Rating index
F-factor	See Chapter 2—Definitions
FDD	Fault detection and diagnostics
FEG	Fan efficiency grade
FL	Full load
ft <sup>2</sup>	Square foot
gpm	Gallons per minute
HDD	Heating degree days
hp	Horsepower
HSPF	Heating seasonal performance factor
HVAC	Heating, ventilating and air conditioning
IEER	Integrated energy efficiency ratio

IPLV	Integrated Part Load Value
Kg/m <sup>2</sup>	Kilograms per square meter
kW	Kilowatt
LPD	Light power density (lighting power allowance)
L/s	Liters per second
Ls	Liner system
m <sup>2</sup>	square meters
MERV	Minimum efficiency reporting value
NAECA	National Appliance Energy Conservation Act
NPLV	Nonstandard Part Load Value
Pa	Pascal
PF	Projection factor
pcf	Pounds per cubic foot
psf	Pounds per square foot
PTAC	Packaged terminal air conditioner
PTHP	Packaged terminal heat pump
R-value	See Chapter 2—Definitions
SCOP	Sensible coefficient of performance
SEER	Seasonal energy efficiency ratio
SHGC	Solar Heat Gain Coefficient
SPVAC	Single packaged vertical air conditioner
SPVHP	Single packaged vertical heat pump
SRI	Solar reflectance index
SWHF	Service water heat recovery factor
U-factor	See Chapter 2—Definitions
VAV	Variable air volume
VRF	Variable refrigerant flow
VT	Visible transmittance
W	Watts
w.c.	Water column
w.g.	Water gauge