

Understanding BEPS

A Guide to Seattle's Building Emissions Performance Standard

Seattle's Building Emissions Performance Standard (BEPS) law sets emissions targets that get stronger every five years, with most required buildings reaching net-zero between 2041 and 2050. By 2050, BEPS is projected to cut citywide building emissions by 27%, making it one of Seattle's most impactful climate actions.

BEPS covers existing nonresidential and multifamily buildings larger than 20,000 square feet (SF), excluding parking. These are the same buildings required to report annual Energy Benchmarking data to the City. Industrial and manufacturing buildings and single-family homes are exempt. Larger buildings must comply first, giving smaller buildings more time to prepare (see Figure 1).

Compliance for the 2027–2030 interval is about taking three steps:

- 1 Identifying a [Qualified Person](#) (QP)
- 2 Conducting [Benchmarking Verification](#)
- 3 Preparing a [GHG \(Greenhouse Gas\) Report](#)

First, choose a Qualified Person. They are required for steps 2 and 3 to check a building's existing benchmarking data for accuracy, assess current building emissions, and outline a plan to meet **2031–2035 emissions targets**. The targets get stronger with every five-year period (compliance interval), reaching [net-zero](#) between 2041 and 2050.

Key terms are defined on page 4

Figure 1

BEPS COMPLIANCE TIMELINE, BASED ON BUILDING SIZE

Building Size (SF)	Benchmarking Verification and GHG Report (by Oct. 1)	Meet GHGI Target, Benchmarking Verification, and GHG Report (by Oct. 1)
≥ 220,001	2027	2031 → 2036 → 2041 → 2046
90,001–220,000	2027	2032 → 2037 → 2042 → 2047
50,001–90,000	2028	2033 → 2038 → 2043 → 2048
30,001–50,000	2029	2034 → 2039 → 2044 → 2049
20,001–30,000	2030	2035 → 2040 → 2045 → 2050
Building portfolios, district campus, and connected buildings	2028	2033 → 2038 → 2043 → 2048

Emissions Targets

BEPS sets [greenhouse gas emissions intensity targets](#) (GHGIT) that buildings must meet for each compliance interval. Targets apply to 24 building activity types that align with ENERGY STAR® Portfolio Manager® property types like office, retail, and multifamily. Targets reach net-zero for all nonresidential building types in 2041–2045 and multifamily in 2046–2050.

For portfolios or buildings with multiple uses, GHGIT is based on the gross floor area (GFA) of the different uses (see Figure 2). [Emissions deductions](#) for certain fossil fuel uses such as cooking equipment and district steam give owners flexibility in meeting their building’s targets.

All-electric buildings are exempt from meeting targets once Benchmarking Verification confirms the building uses no fossil fuels.

Looking ahead:



Plan equipment replacements with BEPS in mind, even before your first target is due. For many buildings, the path to compliance is simple: when equipment is due for retirement, replace it with lower emissions and energy efficient options.



All BEPS reporting will be submitted through the Seattle Building & Energy Portal (launching early 2027).



Figure 2
**EXAMPLE GHGIT CALCULATION:
MIXED-USE BUILDING OR PORTFOLIO**

Activity Types	% of GFA	Building Activity Type GHGIT	Weighted GHGIT
Office	80%	0.81	0.64
Retail	13%	1.03	0.13
Gym (recreation)	7%	3.22	0.23
Total GFA	100%	GHGIT (kgCO ₂ e/SF/yr)	1.00

Percent of GFA is multiplied by the 2031–2035 Building Activity Type GHGIT to calculate a weighted GHGIT, which is summed to find the overall GHGIT.



BEPS Flexible Compliance Paths

BEPS allows portfolios and campuses to comply as a group of buildings. Owners may also apply for flexible pathways for buildings with different situations if they meet eligibility criteria.

Path A

Meet GHGITs at each five-year compliance interval

Individual Building Compliance

Meet a GHGIT based on the building's uses, such as a mix of office, retail, and restaurants.

Portfolio Compliance

Owners with a campus or multiple buildings can apply to use an aggregate GHGIT. This is a target based on the total floor area and uses of all the buildings.

Path B

Alternative compliance options

Alternate GHGIT

Owners of very high emissions buildings, campuses, or public/nonprofit portfolios can apply to use a fixed-percent target from the building's baseline GHGI down to net-zero.

Multifamily Prescriptive

Owners of multifamily buildings can install all-electric heat or hot water instead of meeting the GHGIT.

Extensions

Low-income housing, low-rent housing, human service, new construction, high vacancy ($\geq 35\%$), pre-existing financial distress, and recent change of owner.

Alternative Compliance Payment (ACP), 2031–2035 only

A payment based on the metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions over the building's targets. Revenue is used to help under-resourced building owners reduce emissions.

Path C

Custom decarbonization compliance plans

Net-Zero or Low Emissions Plan

A Qualified Person prepares a plan showing how the building will reach net-zero or low emissions by 2041–2050. The plan must include an energy and emissions audit, cost analysis, GHGIT schedule, and planned actions. The BEPS Director's Rule explains different eligibility criteria such as historic buildings and buildings under major renovation.

District Campus Decarbonization Compliance Plan

A Qualified Person prepares a plan showing how the campus will upgrade its district energy plant to reduce emissions as much as meeting the standard GHGIT.

DEDUCTIONS AND EXEMPTIONS

[Emissions deductions](#) can be used for all paths. A Qualified Person must submit documentation.

Exemptions may be applied for all-electric buildings, when a Qualified Person verifies the building uses only electric energy, and buildings scheduled for demolition.

Key Terms

Benchmarking Verification

Benchmarking Verification is required to accurately establish the covered building's GHGI. Every five years, a Qualified Person must verify the building's annual energy and emissions data and correct any errors. The verifier cannot be the same person that prepared the annual [Energy Benchmarking report](#). This requirement is in addition to annual benchmarking.

Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Report

A Qualified Person documents the building's current GHGI, its GHGIT, and outlines a high-level plan to meet future targets.

Qualified Person

A Qualified Person has training, at least three years of professional experience in building energy use analysis, and certain certifications or licenses. Qualified Persons handle Benchmarking Verification, the GHG Report, and most other BEPS reporting (except for some extension and exemption applications). The same person or vendor can serve both BEPS and Washington's Clean Building Performance Standard (CBPS). In-house staff who meet the criteria also qualify.

Emissions Deductions

Certain types of equipment emissions or 'end uses' can be deducted from a building's GHGI, giving owners flexibility to phase upgrades. Examples are emergency generators, fossil fuel cooking appliances, district thermal energy, and emergency heat in hotels and hospitals. Some deductions expire over time.

Greenhouse Gas Intensity (GHGI)

GHGI measures a building's annual greenhouse gas emissions relative to its size, typically expressed as kgCO₂e/SF/yr. To calculate it: multiply each energy source's annual usage (electricity, gas, steam, etc.) by its emissions factor—a measure of that source's greenhouse gas impact. The results are then divided by the building's gross floor area.

Greenhouse Gas Intensity Target (GHGIT)

GHGIT, measured in kgCO₂e/SF/year, is a target a building must meet to comply with BEPS. Targets are set by activity type—and weighted for mixed-use buildings and portfolios.

Net-Zero

For Seattle's BEPS, "net-zero" means a building's annual emissions—including from grid electricity—are at or below residual emissions from the regional power grid. Certain emissions deductions are allowed.



Get started now. Support is available.



Visit the BEPS website: Find a short video on requirements and deadlines, access the Reporting Portal, and more.



Review the BEPS Director's Rule: View details on compliance paths, calculations, and documentation requirements.



Check the Seattle Benchmarking Map: Look up your building's deadlines and estimated BEPS targets.



Get help through the Building Emissions Navigator: Join free group coaching with custom energy scans, drop-in hours, and more.



Apply for Building Decarbonization Grants: Funding prioritizes emissions reduction in under-resourced buildings, but all may apply.



QUESTIONS?

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SCAN CODE OR VISIT

seattle.gov/building-emissions-performance-standard