

# CORE

Community Office for Resource Efficiency

## Energy Code

 Messaging Toolkit

Walking  
Mountains 

CLIMATE  
ACTION  
COLLABORATIVE

AspenCORE.org



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# Who Is This Guide For?

This guide can be used by local government staff, building department officials and staff, elected officials, and others who want to proactively communicate about the benefits of adopting and enforcing new energy codes. This toolkit may also be valuable in addressing questions or concerns about energy codes from building industry professionals or the general public.



# Why This Guide?

Complex energy codes are often viewed by developers as a barrier to quick and cost effective construction. Our regional local governments will benefit from aligning on how we talk about the purpose and importance of advanced energy codes, for climate, public health, and utility bill benefits.



# Why this Guide?

**This guide is meant to be a tool to support aligned communication and combat misconceptions related to advanced energy codes, ideally resulting in a development community that understands and supports our energy code choices.**

*This is not a technical resource.*



# Why this Guide?

Climate pollution is harming our community. Building sector greenhouse gas emissions across Pitkin County account for the largest portion of emissions in the County, at **55.9%** as of 2023.

Across Eagle County, building emissions account for **42%** of total emissions. We can futureproof climate mitigation efforts by ensuring new construction is built energy efficiently and does not emit fossil fuels – this is where the importance of advanced energy codes come into play.



# Why this Guide?

## Some non-exhaustive history on advanced energy code collaboration

In 2022–2023, Eagle County communities took part in the Eagle County Code Cohort, led by Walking Mountains and Lotus Engineering and Sustainability, successfully aligning energy codes across the Eagle River Valley.

In 2024–2025, Walking Mountains led an effort for the same group, resulting in receiving funding from the Colorado Energy Office (CEO) to produce a [Regional Net Zero Roadmap](#), an expanded planning project that included all communities in the Eagle River and Roaring Fork Valleys. The Roadmap led to a consensus-based policy pathway for our region to achieve net zero new construction standards by 2030, a shared climate action goal.

In 2025, the Community Office for Resource Efficiency (CORE) was awarded a CEO Energy Code Adoption and Enforcement grant in the region. CORE utilized the award to support building department and workforce training and development, create resources for code implementation and enforcement, and support continued collaboration amongst regional building departments.

In 2025–2026, the City of Aspen applied for CEO IMPACT Accelerator policy funds to build off of years of collaborative momentum toward unified, net zero new construction codes, and focus on implementation of the Regional Roadmap.

# Why this Guide?

## Where are we going?

Our 2030 net zero end-state, as defined by our Regional Roadmap, will include the following code elements for residential and commercial construction:



Adoption of the most recent IECC codes



Homes above a certain size to achieve higher energy efficiency standards (State [MLECC](#) requirement)



All electric with no or rare exceptions



Demand response controls for electric water heaters (per state law CRS 6-7.5-101-110) and thermostats are required



Utilize REMP or EEOP to incentivize battery storage



Energy storage is required if new solar is installed



Solar readiness is required, solar installation is optional (State [MLECC](#) requirement)

# Foundations

Energy codes are a subset of building codes, which establish **baseline requirements for safe and resilient construction**. Energy codes set minimum building energy efficiency standards for new construction and renovations. They cover efficiency in building equipment, systems and the thermal envelope.



# Foundations

## Energy codes deliver:



### **Utility cost savings and long-term affordability.**

Buildings that comply with energy codes are designed to use less energy and water, effectively lowering operating costs. This results in a positive return on investment through savings on utility bills.



### **Increased energy efficiency and resiliency.**

As codes incorporate new technologies and design, buildings become better able to endure severe weather and other hazards. Well-insulated homes and energy-efficient windows do a better job of keeping heat inside during cold weather and outside during hot weather. These features can help residents stay safe and comfortable in their homes even when the power goes out.



### **Health benefits.**

Energy codes rely on building science and require a whole-building approach to design. Standards for air sealing, insulation and mechanical ventilation, for example, ensure a reduction in pollutants and makes the air we breathe safer. Moisture management techniques prevent condensation buildup that can lead to mold and mildew.

# Foundations

## Energy codes deliver:



### **Improved comfort.**

Homes and buildings built to newer energy codes have more efficient mechanical systems as well as a better building envelope and ventilation. These design elements result in better air quality and temperature control between rooms, keeping occupants more comfortable.



### **Future proofing.**

Building to the latest standards and including infrastructure for electrification during the construction phase will make homes and buildings better prepared to integrate newer technologies. High-performance homes and buildings are more resilient and will be less likely to require a costly renovation later simply to install new appliances or mechanical systems or to adapt to future regulations.



### **A reduction in greenhouse gas emissions.**

Looking solely at Eagle County, adopting net zero new construction building codes will enable our communities to reduce emissions by more than 1.18 million metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent through 2050. The avoided emissions are roughly equal to the carbon that can be sequestered by planting more than 19 million trees.

# Mythbusting



# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*New energy codes will prohibitively increase the cost of construction.*

## BUSTED

*Increased insulation and higher quality windows, for instance, can add to the cost of a new building, but are paid off through utility bill savings. In fact, energy codes are the only codes that pay for themselves. Building right from the start is the most cost effective way to build.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*More stringent energy codes will make constructing more affordable housing unattainable due to the increased costs.*

## BUSTED

*New code requirements are a small percentage of the total cost of construction. Increases in material and labor costs, supply chain constraints, rising demand, and inflation are the primary drivers for the rise in building costs. Additionally, federal incentives such as Low-Income Housing Tax Credits (LIHTCs) offer investors a reduction in their federal tax liability in return for providing financial support to affordable housing projects. Building affordable housing to more stringent energy codes will lower residents' energy burden and improve their health and safety.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*The savings from new energy codes are passed onto the building owner – how does this benefit the developer?*

## BUSTED

*Although homeowners get the monthly bill savings, developers can benefit from faster sales and higher valuations, fewer warranty costs, marketing advantages and differentiation, and smoother permitting.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*Meeting energy codes requires drastic changes in how you live, like limiting water use or cooking on an electric cooktop. People don't want to change their lifestyles.*

## BUSTED

*Advanced energy codes often focus on building performance through technologies like better insulation and air sealing, which can make homes more comfortable without changing a homeowner's lifestyle. Electric cooking may take time to get used to, but homeowners will avoid unnecessary toxins in the home that come from gas cooktops. Moreover, cooking on an induction stove is faster, easier to control, and safer than cooking with gas!*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*Why are our region's energy codes so advanced compared to the State and other communities?*

## BUSTED

*They aren't! Colorado currently (2025) requires the 2021 IECC and electric, solar, and EV readiness. The Model Low Energy and Carbon Code will require the 2024 IECC, solar and EV readiness, electric preferred standards, additional energy efficiency for large homes, and more. Mountain communities across the state go above and beyond these requirements, some of whom require full electrification. Our communities are going far, but not in an outsized way compared to the state and surrounding communities.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*Stronger energy codes will move development to neighboring jurisdictions!*

## BUSTED

*Not necessarily. Studies on development trends in areas with strong energy codes indicate that energy codes are likely not a primary driver of development moving to other areas. Resort communities are notoriously expensive to build and live in, and that hasn't stopped them from being highly sought after.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*Why are resort adjacent communities in our region adopting the same, if not more, advanced energy codes as resort communities? Is that necessary?*

## BUSTED

*Code consistency across our region is the best thing we can do to support workforce training, keep compliance high and costs low. Consistency creates more efficiency, a more knowledgeable workforce, and economies of scale.*

# Here's the challenge

## MYTH

*We don't have the workforce to support advanced energy codes!*

## BUSTED

*Implementing consistent, advanced energy codes actively stimulates job creation, and current workforce challenges can be solved through strategic investments in training and education across the region.*

# Energy Code Drivers in our Region





# Energy Code Drivers in our Region

## Colorado's Building Energy Codes.

Colorado state law requires jurisdictions to adopt and enforce the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) and the Colorado Model Electric Ready and Solar Ready Code upon adopting or updating any other building code between July 1, 2023 and June 30, 2026. These code requirements prepare new homes and buildings for electric vehicles, rooftop solar, and high efficiency electric appliances.

Starting July 1, 2026, jurisdictions that adopt or update any other building code must adopt a code that is equivalent to or stronger than the Colorado Model Low Energy and Carbon Code.

The MLECC is based on the 2024 IECC and minimizes pollution associated with new and renovated homes and commercial buildings, with amendments specific to Colorado.

Jurisdictions can make any amendment to the energy code they deem appropriate for local conditions. However, these amendments cannot decrease the effectiveness or energy efficiency of the code.

# Energy Code Drivers in our Region

## Consistency across the region.

Adopting the same code requirements as neighboring jurisdictions reduces the time and cost that architects, contractors, and builders have to spend to understand, design, and build to different code requirements. As building industry professionals become more familiar with consistent code requirements, their expertise grows, leading to higher code compliance. Since our workforce typically works across the entire region, wouldn't it be easier if they only had to focus on one set of building energy codes to learn?



# Energy Code Drivers in our Region

## Community Commitments to Climate Goals.

As noted earlier, building energy consumption is one of the largest contributors to pollution in Eagle and Pitkin Counties. As a result, adopting advanced building energy codes across our region is a top priority to meet the goals of our respective climate action plans. Following through on our code commitments will ensure that we build right from the start, which will lead to a healthier and more resilient future for our mountain communities.



# Why All-Electric?



# Why All-Electric?

## Community Commitments to Climate Goals.

**85%** of the electricity powering our region comes from **clean, renewable sources**, supplied by Holy Cross Energy, the primary electricity provider for local homes and businesses (2025).

**100%** **renewable energy by 2030** is the target Holy Cross Energy is actively working toward.

**80%** **carbon-emission reductions by 2030** are required of Xcel Energy, reinforcing a statewide shift toward cleaner power.

**100%** **renewable electricity** already powers the Cities of Aspen and Glenwood Springs.

**With this momentum toward clean energy, it makes sense for new buildings to rely on efficient electric equipment and appliances that align with the energy powering our region.**

The movement towards all-electric new construction has been gaining momentum over the past several years. The towns of Crested Butte and Lafayette, CO have passed all-electric codes and several other cities and counties in the state are considering this as of 2025. Dozens of cities and towns in other states have adopted all-electric requirements as well.

**Furthermore, electric readiness codes, currently required by the state, can be confusing and costly compared to all-electric.** Electric readiness requires new homes and buildings to include the infrastructure to easily accommodate future electric systems, while still allowing homeowners to build with mixed fuels. Sizing for future electric systems can be nebulous and costly compared to building all-electric from the start.



Holy Cross Energy, the primary electricity provider in our region, has been an active supporter and participant in regional energy code update collaborations. To demonstrate confidence in their ability to deliver safe, reliable, and clean energy, while advancing their goal of achieving 100% renewable energy by 2030, and in recognition of regional energy code objectives, Holy Cross Energy has provided a letter for communities to reference.

[Download Letter](#)

# Why EV Charging Requirements?





# Why EV Charging Requirements?

## Consider these facts:

**1.3+**

**million EVs** had been sold in the U.S. by October 2025, signaling rapid nationwide adoption.

**210,000+**

**EVs are now registered in Colorado,** where electric vehicles account for 25% of all new vehicle sales.

**10.5%**

**of all new vehicle sales in Q3 2025 were electric,** marking a new all-time high, with Colorado leading the country by percentage of EV sales.

**60-68%**

**lower lifetime emissions** are produced by EVs compared to gas-powered vehicles, reinforcing their long-term environmental impact.

**100%**

**zero-emission light-duty vehicles by 2050** is Colorado's statewide goal, with an interim milestone of 940,000 EVs on the road by 2030.

**EV adoption cannot happen without adequate EV charging infrastructure.** EV readiness and installation requirements ensure a cost effective and efficient build-out of EV charging infrastructure, preparing us for the future. The State of Colorado requires EV readiness in the building code.

# Why EEOP & REMP?

The Exterior Energy Offset Program (EEOP) and Renewable Energy Mitigation Program (REMP) are policies **designed to encourage sustainable and energy-efficient solutions for residential and commercial exterior amenity loads, such as snowmelt systems, pools, spas, outdoor fireplaces, and more.**



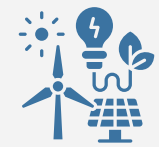
# Why EEOP & REMP?



Exterior energy loads require **immense energy** to heat the outdoors in our climate.



Amenity loads are **non-essential loads** that contribute greatly to the emissions and pollution in our resort and resort-adjacent communities.



Those that need to comply with EEOP or REMP are typically given one of two options: pay a fee, or offset the energy use with onsite renewable energy. Ideally, developers will choose to offset.



If fees are collected, they are calculated based on the cost of local solar that would need to be installed to fully offset the exterior amenity.



EEOP and REMP fees that are collected are used to fund additional energy efficiency, electrification, and renewable energy projects within the community. Communities have discretion over how they use the funds.



**EEOP and REMP are purposefully designed to push developers to rethink exterior amenity decisions, and their fees are set to truly account for the climate and public-health costs these amenities impose.**

# Energy Codes and Public Health

Incorporating a whole-building approach and treating building elements as interconnected systems has helped improve the efficiency, resiliency, and durability of buildings over time. Yet the benefits don't stop there: **there is also a strong link between energy codes and public health and safety.**

# Energy Codes and Public Health



Improved air sealing, building envelope, and proper mechanical ventilation practices **reduce the risk of carbon monoxide** and result in better indoor air quality.



Gas stoves release nitrogen dioxide, carbon monoxide, and benzene, which have been linked to respiratory issues such as asthma and other negative health outcomes. **Opting for an electric or induction stove significantly reduces pollutants** and associated health risks.



High performance standards result in **increased occupant comfort** due to fewer drafts and more consistent indoor temperatures.



Better ventilation and a separation between conditioned and unconditioned spaces **reduce air pollutants**, leading to lower incidences of asthma, especially in children.



Moisture management techniques **decrease the risk of mold and mildew** from forming.



Tight construction and air sealing contribute to improved building **resiliency from fire and smoke damage, temperature swings, and extreme weather events.**



Lower utility operating costs can **reduce energy burden and lower financial stress**, enabling residents to be better able to afford other necessities such as food and healthcare.

# CORE

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