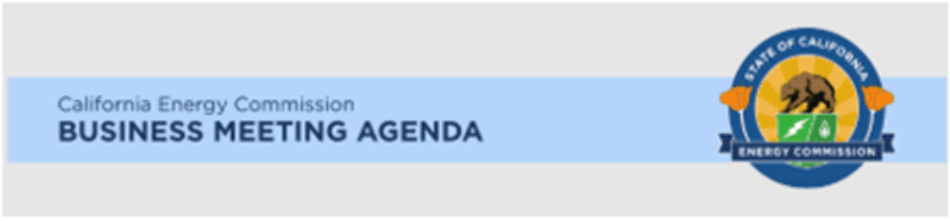
REACH CODE NEWS BRIEF: JANUARY 2021

NEW YEAR KICKS OFF WITH FIVE NEW REACH CODES APPROVED BY ENERGY COMMISSION



The California Energy Commission approved five reach code packages from the cities of Campbell, Millbrae, Sunnyvale, Chula Vista and Los Altos at its monthly business meeting on January 25, 2021.

Highlights of the adopted ordinances include:

City of Campbell

- Electric space and water heating required for residential new construction with gas permitted for cooking appliances and fireplaces

City of Millbrae

- All-electric for new construction with exception for cooking appliances and fireplaces in low-rise residential units and exceptions for commercial kitchens and laboratories. Prewiring for electric appliances is required where gas appliances are installed
- Photovoltaic systems for all new buildings

City of Sunnyvale

- All-electric for new construction and substantial renovations and additions with exceptions some occupancy types such as emergency centers and commercial kitchens. Prewiring for electric appliances is required where gas appliances are installed
- Photovoltaic systems for all new buildings

City of Chula Vista

- Prescriptive or performance-based energy efficiency improvements when adding to or remodeling homes and condominiums built prior to 2006

City of Los Altos

- All-electric required for new low-rise residential projects including accessory dwelling units with exceptions for gas cooking appliances and fireplaces.
- All-electric for new nonresidential and high-rise multifamily buildings with exceptions allowed for laboratories and commercial kitchens. Prewiring for electric appliances is required where gas appliances are installed.

Visitors can browse our website for detailed information about adopted reach codes throughout the state (map view or the adopted ordinances list).

UPCOMING EVENTS

February

February 1: CABEC's 2021 Virtual Conference Series "Solving the Energy Puzzle"

February 1-2: California Irrigation Institute Annual Conference

February 10: Energy Commission Business Meeting.

February 9-11: GreenBiz Forum

February 23: Climate Safe California Webinar #2: Phasing Out Fossil Fuels: A Just Transition in the Oil & Gas Drilling and Refining Sectors



Be sure to follow us on Twitter for the latest news and information!

NEW THIS MONTH!



Q&A WITH MARY ANN DICKINSON: NET BLUE & WATER NEUTRALITY

Mary Ann Dickinson is the President and CEO of the Alliance for Water Efficiency, a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting the efficient and sustainable use of water in the United States and Canada. Based in Chicago, the Alliance works with 520 water utilities, water conservation professionals in business and industry, planners, regulators, and consumers. In 2014, the Alliance won the U.S. Water Prize in the non-profit category for its work.

Q: Tell us a little about the Net Blue program, Mary Ann.

A: The Net Blue initiative is a collaboration between the Alliance for Water Efficiency (AWE), the Environmental Law Institute, and River Network. This initiative focuses on helping communities build a framework for water-neutral growth. It is an approach designed to keep water use at the same or reduced levels as a community continues to develop. This concept of “water neutral” growth is achieved by integrating land use planning and water management to require or incentivize water use offsets (e.g., water efficiency retrofits) that will equal or exceed the additional demand of new development or redevelopment (residential and commercial).

Q: How does Net Blue help communities achieve these goals?

A: The initiative has developed a Net Blue Ordinance Toolkit containing a range of resources including:

- Model Ordinance Worksheet that assists local jurisdiction staff to tailor a water-offset ordinance to the unique needs of their local community.
- Model Ordinance User's Guide with useful guidance to maximize the worksheet potential.
- Sample Net Blue ordinances that illustrate the range of possibilities.
- Offset Methodology Workbook that offers a user-friendly structure for calculating offsets from off-site water conservation retrofits, rainwater harvesting, and stormwater capture.
- Offset Methodology User Guide.
- Sample Water Demand Offset Strategies that illustrate how offsets can be calculated for the sample ordinance examples.

Q: What is the relationship between water neutrality and energy-related reach codes?

A: The water-energy nexus refers to the relationship between how much water is used to generate and transmit energy, and how much energy it takes to collect, clean, move, store, and dispose of water. For water-constrained communities, such as many throughout California, achieving "water neutral" growth saves water, which also saves the energy that would have been used to pump and treat that water, thus contributing to greenhouse gas emission reduction goals in local climate action plans.

Q: What do you see as the greatest challenge for local jurisdictions considering water neutrality ordinances as part of their reach codes program or CAP activities?

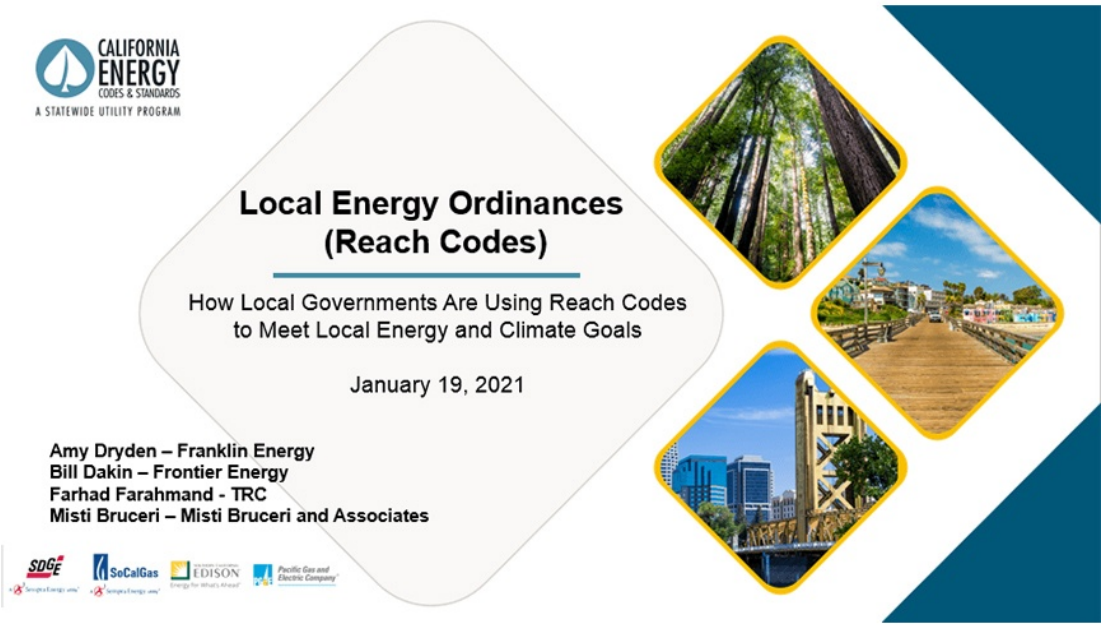
A: We have heard from communities pursuing water neutrality ordinances that uncertainty and unpredictability is one of the biggest concerns. Developers need to understand what they can build at what cost. Planning officials need to be confident that they can evaluate projects with certainty and understand what the future offset requirements will be so they can continue to move through the process with a firm understanding that the project will succeed. Robust offset planning tools are essential to satisfying this concern.

Q: Are any California communities pursuing water neutrality programs currently?

A: Our report Water Offset Policies for Water-Neutral Community Growth explores the experiences of 13 communities throughout the United States that currently have a water demand offset policy or water neutral growth policy in place. Many of these are in California, including San Luis Obispo, Cambria, Lompoc, East Bay Municipal Utility District, and more. Since the report was prepared the city of Santa Monica has adopted a similar water neutrality program.

Q: What are some 'first steps' local jurisdictions can take to explore development of water neutrality programs?

A: We invite anyone to visit the Net Blue webpage and download the report and materials referenced above. There are fact sheets and FAQs available also, and these tools are all free of charge. Of course, we're always happy to discuss specific needs and explore additional levels of technical support.



REACH CODES TEAM PRESENTS AT CABEC 2021 CONFERENCE

Reach code experts teamed up to deliver a timely presentation at the 2021 CABEC "Solving the Energy Puzzle" Virtual Conference Series on January 19, 2021. Panelists included Amy Dryden from the Association for Energy Affordability, Bill Dakin from Frontier Energy, Farhad Farahmand of TRC, and Misti Bruceri representing the statewide reach codes program.

The 60-minute presentation provided a comprehensive deep dive into reach codes, including:

- An overview of driving elements for jurisdictions and their goals
- Summaries of the cost effectiveness studies for both low rise residential and non-residential buildings and the measure list that supports the performance thresholds.
- Summaries of ordinances and the requirements that are being adopted and developed based on the cost effectiveness framework
- Discussion of what this means for the consultants and common questions from stakeholder engagement
- A review of existing resources, both from the statewide reach code program and collaborating programs.

For more information on the CABEC “Solving the Energy Puzzle” Virtual Conference Series, visit CABEC.



FRONTRUNNER: SAN FRANCISCO ACCELERATES DECARBONIZATION VISION WITH ALL-ELECTRIC MEASURE

San Francisco policymakers have adopted a 30-year perspective, reflecting on progress compared to a 1990 greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions baseline and what to achieve in the upcoming 30 years. From 1990-2020, the community reduced GHG emissions from all buildings by 50% while the economy more than doubled in size and population increased 20%.

A key strategy contributing to these efforts has been consistent adoption of reach codes. Most recently, efforts by the City's Zero Emission Building Taskforce (ZEBT) have focused on approaches that will fulfill the City’s decarbonization commitments equitably and effectively.

An all-electric new construction ordinance was introduced to the Board of Supervisors in June 2020, which kicked off a series of more than a dozen public meetings, ultimately leading to unanimous approval November 10, 2020.

The All-Electric New Construction Ordinance requires all applications for permits for new construction submitted on or after June 1, 2021 to be all electric. There are limited exceptions allowing mixed fuel in new construction.

"We are indebted to local stakeholders and city staff – foremost the Department of Building Inspection – for countless hours serving on the Zero Emission Buildings Task Force and participating in dozens of public meetings in consideration of the major step of requiring all-electric for all new construction,” says Barry Hooper, Senior Green Building Coordinator with the San Francisco Department of Environment.

Read the complete Frontrunner here.

Photo courtesy of City of San Francisco Department of the Environment.

OTHER REACH CODE NEWS BRIEFS

October 2026 September 2026 August 2026
Archives