REACH CODE NEWS BRIEF: APRIL 2020

SEVEN ADDITIONAL REACH CODE PACKAGES APPROVED IN APRIL JUST AHEAD OF 50TH ANNIVERSARY OF EARTH DAY



The California Energy Commission approved another seven reach code packages for the County of Los Angeles and the cities of San Francisco, Mill Valley, San Rafael, Pacifica, Cupertino, and Saratoga during its business meeting on April 8. This milestone coincides with the 50th anniversary of Earth Day.

First organized by numerous environmental activists, the initial Earth Day in 1970 drew as many as 20 million Americans to participate in peaceful demonstrations, clean-up activities and educational activities. The initial event is credited with increasing public and policy awareness of environmental issues and leading to the passage of such landmark legislation as the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and the Endangered Species Act as well as the establishment of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

The theme for this year's 50th anniversary observance is climate action. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, many Earth Day activities and events have migrated from in-person opportunities to digital programs and events. The Earth Day Network hosts an expansive list of activities here.

Visit our website for detailed information about adopted reach codes throughout the state.

UPCOMING EVENTS



April

April 23: Virtual Office Hours: Local Natural Gas Emission Reduction Options.

May

May 7: Statewide Codes & Standards Stakeholders webinar for 2022 Standards: Multi-family Chapter Restructuring.

May 13: Kicking Carbon out of Buildings-Design for Decarbonized Buildings. Pacific Energy Center webinar.

May 20: CABEC Brown Bag Webinar: Don’t Be Afraid! Pulling Architects into Conceptual and Compliance Energy Modeling

June

June 11: BayREN Forum

June 17: CABEC Brown Bag Webinar: Gloomy Ducts? HERS Verified Duct Design

June 1, 9, 17, 25: SEEC Forum: virtual forum with weekly sessions extending from June - November 2020.

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

NEW THIS MONTH



Q&A WITH DANUTA DROZDOWICZ: UNDERSTANDING THE ROLE OF THE ENERGY COMMISSION IN REACH CODE IMPLEMENTATION

Danuta Drozdowicz is an Energy Specialist in the Efficiency Division at the California Energy Commission (CEC). Her background is in energy efficient construction and building science. Before joining the CEC, she worked as a LEED and green building consultant, first with a Portland, Maine based company, Fore Solutions, and then with her own firm, Context Green. Prior to that she worked for the state of Maine, focusing on energy efficient construction, indoor and outdoor air quality, and clean fuel vehicle testing and demonstration projects.

Drozdowicz is a LEED and a WELL Accredited Professional.

Q: Tell us a little about your role at the Energy Commission, Danuta

A: My primary responsibility is to facilitate and manage the reach code adoption process, from the time an individual application arrives at the California Energy Commission, on through to the Business Meeting where it is considered for approval. Because this is a legal process in which the Commission extends enforcement authority to the local jurisdiction, every aspect of the process must comply with specific procedures.

Q: How long does this process typically take?

A: It can be a lengthy process; until quite recently, it has taken up to four or five months. We have been working very hard to streamline this process without compromising the right of public review and comment. Recently, in some cases, we have been successful in shortening this process to only a few weeks.

Local jurisdictions should recognize that there may be a significant length of time between when they deliver the reach code package to the Commission and when it is ultimately approved. That said, most of the packages we receive are very complete and well-done and we are impressed with the quality and diversity of measures being developed.

Q: What exactly do you mean by diversity, Danuta?

A: In the first place it has to do with the building types the jurisdiction focuses on. For instance, some jurisdictions will focus on single-family residential construction and others on high-rise or nonresidential buildings. We’re also seeing a broad range of efficiency improvements, such as electric-preferred, LEED-certified, and requirements for reflective cool roofs and additional photovoltaic system installations.

Q: Does the Commission provide support or other assistance to jurisdictions?

A: The Commission cannot provide specific content advice in order to avoid creating a conflict of interest, though we are always able to answer questions related to process. There is a wide range of assistance available to local city and county staff when they

are preparing a reach code package. For instance, we can recommend third party organizations providing support, such as the Statewide Reach Codes program, as well as the experience of other jurisdictions that are developing similar provisions.

The local ordinance docket is a rich resource for jurisdictions, as this houses all the filed documents from every jurisdiction seeking reach code approval under the 2019 Energy Code. These include staff reports, cost-effectiveness studies, and the complete text of the ordinances themselves. All of these can be extremely valuable to jurisdictions that may be at an earlier point in the process.

Q: What are the biggest obstacles local jurisdictions encounter when developing reach ordinances?

A: There is no one common obstacle, to be honest. Every jurisdiction has unique challenges and because the process is a public one, the community's stakeholders really guide and influence it. In some cases, a City Council or county Board of Supervisors may review a draft and request the team re-visit certain provisions. If there is one commonality, it would be that the process often takes longer than originally anticipated by local teams.



CITY OF SANTA MONICA ENRICHES ITS SUSTAINABILITY PROGRAMS WITH AMBITIOUS 2019 REACH CODE PACKAGE

With nearly 93,000 residents, world-famous beach and Pier, Santa Monica also boasts one of the oldest commitments to sustainable building practices in the state and nation. The City first proposed its Sustainable City Plan in 1992 and in 1994, was one of the first cities to formally adopt a comprehensive sustainability plan, setting waste reduction and water conservation policies for both public and private sector through its Office of Sustainability and the Environment. In 2016, Santa Monica adopted its first reach ordinances and continues to demonstrate its commitment with its 2019 adoption of a comprehensive package of reach ordinances.

Drew Johnstone, Senior Sustainability Analyst notes, “We focused on extending efforts in areas where we have already had great success. In regards to reach ordinances, this focus involves advancing the use of renewable generation resources and incentivizing decarbonization. With regards to community awareness and acceptance, this focus means renewed efforts to educate andinform our community and provide robust resources to help stakeholders comply with the new ordinances.”

The package, approved by the Energy Commission in December 2019, provides two construction options for builders and developers.

- all-electric option
- mixed-fuel option

As an incentive to design all-electric buildings, Santa Monica’s ordinance requires a higher level of energy efficiency for mixed-fuel buildings. All-electric buildings are not subject to higher levels of energy efficiency and may be built to the State’s baseline efficiency requirements.

To support compliance with the new 2019 reach ordinances, the City added new resources to its already-robust Green Building website and teamed with Southern California Edison and the Los Angeles chapter of the USGBC (U.S. Green Building Council) to host compliance workshops for stakeholders to learnabout the new reach code compliance pathways in detail.

Read the full story of the City of Santa Monica's reach code journey here.



STAKEHOLDER PROFILE: NEW 'ZERO ENERGY HOMES' IN SAN JOAQUIN VALLEY MAY HELP INCREASE INTEREST IN REACH CODES

This story profiles De Young Properties, a developer in the Fresno area, that is actively building all-electric new home construction.

When most people think of the San Joaquin Valley they tend to think about prime agricultural land and some of the 230 crops grown in what is known as the “food basket of the world.” If third generation Fresno homebuilder Brandon De Young, Executive Vice President of De Young Properties (DYP) has his way, people will also begin to think about all-electric homes as a means to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

“When you combine the solar generation on all our homes with electric appliances, the numbers work, and it is a great story. Energy efficiency in our 'Zero Energy Homes' remains especially important, but it is becoming more about reducing GHGs now,” Brandon says.

To date, no local government in the Valley offers financial incentives for GHG-saving homes, but many believe this will change soon. Brandon commented, “We believe that local governments will support State efforts to reduce emissions, but we don't intend

to wait for new programs or incentives. Incentives will help with market penetration for sure. A new (above-code) Reach Code program for new residential construction in our region would be nice since all of our 'Zero Energy Homes' easily surpass the new 2019 Title 24 energy code.”

City of Fresno Sustainability Manager, Ann Kloose believes there is merit in Reach Code programs, “We are very inspired by what DeYoung Properties and other builders are doing with above-code construction and solar in the Valley. The Valley goes a little slower than the rest of the state since revenues and resources are more limited. Electrification is certainly gaining momentum and the City is moving forward on electric vehicle charging stations, and we support more home charging stations.”

While new residential construction permits are slowing in the City of Fresno, DYP continues to sell homes and builds around 100 'Zero Energy Homes' each year in growing neighboring communities such as Clovis. Increased comfort, lower energy bills, and regional air quality improvements due to emissions savings have always been key selling points.

DYP is building and selling all-electric homes with heat pumps, water heaters and electric ranges without receiving financial incentives from utilities or manufacturers. “Our sample size is small, but once the customer sees the five-minute compilation of electric appliance videos there is a much greater chance, somewhere between 25-50 percent, that they will choose the electric range to complement their solar generated electricity . . . while our suppliers could change, the videos from each manufacturer will probably remain important at the point of sale to educate prospective buyers about the benefits of induction electric cooking.”

To find out more about DYP's 'Zero Energy Homes', visit here.

For more information about the City of Fresno's sustainability efforts, visit here.

OTHER REACH CODE NEWS BRIEFS

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Archives