

ATTACHMENT H -
TRIENNIAL COUNTY BUILDING CODE
UPDATE
(SUPPLEMENT AND RESOURCES)

ADOPT AN ORDINANCE REPEALING AND REENACTING THE COUNTY BUILDING, RESIDENTIAL, ELECTRICAL, PLUMBING, MECHANICAL, ENERGY EFFICIENCY, GREEN BUILDING CODES, AND RELATED CEQA EXEMPTION (TRIENNIAL COUNTY BUILDING CODE UPDATE)

The Following are Board Letter Supplement and Resources Expanding the technical aspects of the Triennial County Building Code Updates:

State Energy Code Updates

The State Model Code updates include changes made to the Energy Code. As California’s primary energy policy and planning agency, the California Energy Commission (CEC) was mandated by the Warren-Alquist Act to update and adopt building standards that reduce wasteful, uneconomic, inefficient, or unnecessary energy consumption and reduce GHG emissions. That’s because homes and businesses use nearly 70 percent of California’s electricity. They are also responsible for about 25 percent of the State’s GHG emissions. Every three years, the CEC updates the Energy Code, which is published by the California Building Standards Commission (CBSC) as part of the State Model Code (itself, known as Title 24 of the California Code of Regulations). The CEC’s efficiency standards for buildings and appliances have together saved Californians more than \$100 billion in avoided energy costs over the last 50 years. Thanks to efficiency measures, California, the U.S. state with the highest population and largest economy (almost \$3.9 trillion GDP in 2023), has the second-lowest per capita energy use in both the residential and commercial sectors.

Meeting State Climate Goals through better buildings in California, the Energy Code governs the energy-saving features of newly constructed buildings, building additions, and alterations to existing buildings. The standards for 2025 are cost-effective and are estimated to provide over \$4.8 billion in statewide energy cost savings over 30 years. The 2025 updates strongly contribute to California’s efforts to “decarbonize” its buildings: reducing their carbon emissions. The Energy Code reduces emissions by making buildings more energy efficient; encouraging the use of energy-efficient heat pumps for space and water heating; using clean energy generated onsite by solar panels in combination with battery storage; and shifting times of energy use to avoid peak periods of the day when dirty and inefficient power plants are supplying more power to the grid.

The 2025 Energy Code Update focuses on expanding the use of heat for space conditioning and water heating in newly constructed single-family, multifamily, and select nonresidential buildings. The standards also allow for flexibility in taking alternative but equally efficient approaches.

- For homes, use heat pumps for both space heating and water heating, expanding on the single heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- For nonresidential building types, expanding on the single-zone heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- For low-rise multifamily buildings with individual water heaters in dwelling units, use heat pump water heater baselines, expanding on the space heating heat pump baselines in the 2022 update.
- Encouraging electric-ready buildings to set up owners to use cleaner electric water heating, clothes dryers, and cooking when they are ready to invest in those technologies.

- Updating photovoltaic (PV) and battery energy storage system standards for high-rise multifamily and nonresidential buildings to achieve cost-effective installations in consideration of revised net billing and virtual net billing rules.
- Updating space conditioning system control standards for nonresidential buildings.
- Updating ventilation requirements in multifamily buildings to improve indoor air quality.

The 2025 State Code does not mandate specific fuel types. According to the State, California’s Energy Code is founded on the principle of enabling building designers to use a range of options for complying with energy requirements. For example, an energy design professional can still use both electric- and gas-fueled appliance options while making trade-offs to meet the new energy code targets for the specific climate zone.

Green Building Code (CalGreen) Updates

Newly constructed multi-family dwellings, hotels and motels have new EV-capable, EV-ready, and EVSE-installed requirements based on the total number of parking spaces proposed as a part of the project. The chart below (CalGreen Table 5.106.5.3.1) illustrates the new standards based on the total number of parking spaces.

TOTAL NUMBER OF ACTUAL PARKING SPACES	NUMBER OF REQUIRED EV CAPABLE SPACES	OTHER THAN OFFICE AND RETAIL NUMBER OF REQUIRED EVCS	OFFICE & RETAIL NUMBER OF REQUIRED EVCS
1-9	0	0	0
10-25	4	2	3
26-50	8	4	6
51-75	13	6	8
76-100	17	8	13
101-150	25	12	19
151-200	35	18	26
201 and over	20 percent of actual parking spaces	25 percent of EV capable spaces	75 percent of EV capable spaces

Summary of Prior County Amendments to State Model Code

The majority of the County’s local amendments to State building standards in the proposed ordinance are identical to, or minor clarifications of, local amendments in past ordinances previously approved by the Board and include:

- Additional and enhanced child-drowning prevention measures for residential swimming pools (effective in the County since 1998).
- Clarified provisions for means of egress providing safer access and escape routes in the event of fire and other emergencies from one- and two-family dwelling units and accessory structures (effective in the County since 2011).

- Features in new single-family residential construction accommodating future installation of solar photovoltaic and electric vehicle charging systems (effective in the County since 2015).
- Increased indoor water efficiency in new residential construction with installation of water-efficient appliances and water-conserving kitchen faucets under CalGreen Voluntary Tiers (effective in the County since 2020).
- Allowances for construction of nonresidential and multi-family structures in FEMA-mapped alluvial fan flood areas. The allowance for construction requires elevation of qualifying structures above base flood depth to ensure such structures remain safe and functional during flood events (effective in the County since 2020).
- Clarified and reorganized County provisions applicable to patio covers (effective in the County since 2020).
- Amendments for subcontractor disclosures to promote contractor transparency, workforce protection, and contracting equity through construction (effective in the County since 2025).
- Federal Emergency Management Association (FEMA) updates to identify requirements for alterations to buildings to be designed and/or located to prevent water entry or accumulation.
- Adoption of Appendix P (2025 State Model Code) for emergency housing options to address a shelter crisis arising from a declared disaster.

Beyond minor grammatical and formatting revisions, new local amendments in the proposed ordinance are limited to:

- Updates to the Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance requested by FEMA to ensure that unincorporated communities maintain current discounts on flood insurance premiums.
 - FEMA regularly conducts compliance reviews of a community's floodplain management program, including its floodplain management ordinance. These reviews are typically conducted annually, but can be performed less often for communities that are more experienced in administering FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) locally. The County's last several audits have been conducted on a five-year cycle, most recently in May 2023. In addition to the regularly scheduled audits, certain events can trigger a review of a community's floodplain management ordinance, such as a floodplain map revision that crosses multiple jurisdictions. In May 2025, FEMA notified multiple communities, including the County of San Diego and the Cities of San Diego, El Cajon, Santee, and Poway, that they would be reviewing their floodplain ordinances as part of a floodplain map re-study. This past August, FEMA shared its findings based on the review of the County's Flood Damage Prevention Ordinance (FDPO). First and foremost, the ordinance complies with FEMA's National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) requirements. In addition to the NFIP, the County participates in FEMA's voluntary Community Rating System (CRS) program, which incentivizes communities to take actions that exceed NFIP minimum requirements, such as protecting open spaces, hazard mitigation planning, and administrative tasks related to tracking development in mapped floodplains. Because of the County's activities in the CRS program, FEMA provides 20% reductions on flood insurance premiums for homeowners and businesses in the unincorporated areas. In this audit, FEMA

advised that due to recent changes to the CRS program and a requirement of the California Board of Engineering and Surveying and California Architecture Board, the County was at risk of losing some or part of the 20% reduction unless the ordinance is amended with today's proposed changes, listed below:

- The FDPO is currently written to allow an architect to certify that a new structure being built in a mapped floodplain is elevated to a height that meets the federal flood protection requirements by signing an Elevation Certificate. The FDPO is consistent with FEMA's federal NFIP requirements. However, the California Board of Engineering and Surveying and the California Architecture Board specify that architects may not perform surveying work; therefore, the FDPO should explicitly state that an architect may sign an Elevation Certificate only if the architect uses survey data prepared by a Licensed Surveyor or a Registered Civil Engineer.
- The FDPO is currently written that for new mobile homes built in a mapped floodplain without a detailed flood study, they must be elevated at least 3 feet above the ground. Due to a change in the CRS program, the language should be revised to "at least 24 inches above the highest adjacent ground level with an additional 1 foot of freeboard" to satisfy CRS program prerequisites explicitly.
- These changes are minor and do not introduce additional regulatory requirements.
- The Flood Control District Advisory Commission voted on 11/6/2025 unanimously to support this action.
- County shared this information with PDS's Land Development Technical Working Group, and there was no concern.
- County shared this information with American Institute of Architectures (San Diego chapter) and it was consistent with California Architects Board guideline.
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- Updates to the County Building Codes project exemption list to align with the State Model Code and expand eligibility for those qualifying projects.
- Adoption of the State Model Code Appendices for patio covers, grading, tiny homes, strawbale construction, and emergency housing to provide additional dedicated guidance documents, uniform instructions, and clearly defined code requirements to applicants. The adoption of these selected provisions provides code transparency, allowing project designers, County plan check, and inspection staff to review code requirements under consolidated sections designed to streamline the overall permit and inspection processes. A list of proposed appendices included in the 2025 State Model Code adoption includes the following:
 - Appendix I Patio Covers (2025 California Building Code Volume 1 & 2, Title 24, Part 2)
 - Appendix J Grading - California Building Code Volumes 1 and 2, Title 24, Part 2
 - Appendix BF Patio Covers (2025 California Residential Code, Title 24, Part 2.5)
 - Appendix Bb Tiny Houses (2025 California Residential Code, Title 24, Part 2.5)
 - Appendix Bj Strawbale Construction (2025 California Residential Code, Title 24, Part 2.5)
 - Appendix Cj Emergency Housing - California Residential Code, Title 24, Part 2.5