

Safe, healthy, affordable and resilient: California's path to gas-free homes

With the 2022 update to California's building code, the Energy Commission has the opportunity to ensure that the homes we build this decade are healthy, affordable, and comfortable -- setting a standard for homes that prepare Californians to be resilient to the challenges of climate change, not contribute to it.

What are California's energy efficiency codes for buildings?

- Every three years, the California Energy Commission updates the state's energy codes, also called the building energy efficiency standards (Title 24).
- The updates encourage cost-effective energy efficient technologies in new construction that save Californians money while reducing pollution. Today that means energy efficient homes that use electric appliances powered by California's abundant renewable electricity - instead of polluting fossil fuels like gas.
- Right now, the California Energy Commission is preparing to adopt the 2022 codes for buildings, set to go into effect in 2023.

The Problem: Burning gas in buildings is dangerous For decades, California policy has promoted the use of gas to heat our homes and buildings, while making improvements to how efficiently we burn fossil fuels. But with new data illuminating the health, climate and safety risks of burning gas indoors, it's become clear that Californians would benefit from gas-free homes, rather than incremental efficiency improvements.

What are we asking for? The Energy Commission has an opportunity to protect our health and safety by shifting the new buildings (which we'll live and work for decades to come) away from gas. We are calling on the Commission to make clean, efficient, all-electric buildings the standard for new construction going forward. In practice, this means changing the "baseline" (the energy usage goal against which all proposed buildings are evaluated) in the 2022 building code to be based on an efficient and clean all-electric home.

Benefits of Gas Free Homes

MAKE HEALTHY HOMES STANDARD

Gas appliances make it harder to breathe. Gas stoves fill homes with much of the same pollutants contained in car exhaust - and children living in homes with gas stoves have a 42% increased risk of asthma. Levels of Nitrogen Dioxide in homes with gas stoves are up to 400% higher than in homes with electric stoves.

Not having access to air conditioning is already a major health risk in Southern California - a risk that will only grow. Building new homes with heat pumps to provide both space heating and cooling ensures everyone - regardless of income or housing type - has access to air conditioning.

IMPROVE AIR QUALITY & PUBLIC HEALTH

Californians breathe the dirtiest air in the nation. The housing built this decade should solve that problem - not exacerbate it.

If all residential gas appliances in California were replaced with clean, electric alternatives, the reduction in outdoor air pollution alone would prevent more than 350 premature deaths, nearly 600 cases of acute bronchitis, and 300 cases of chronic bronchitis each year - with a total savings of \$3.5 billion each year.

ALIGN WITH CITY AND STATE CLIMATE POLICIES

Gas appliances like furnaces and water heaters in California's homes and buildings are responsible for over 50 million tons of greenhouse gas (GHG) pollution annually - and there's no way we can hit our climate targets while continuing to burn gas.

Fossil fuel-free homes and buildings are already becoming standard in California. In just 12 months, cities representing nearly 10% of the state's population have committed to gas-free new construction - with more cities joining all the time.

California has already found gas to be incompatible with our climate targets, and the Public Utility Commission has kickstarted a process to guide that transition.

Locking in more fossil fuel infrastructure to deliver gas to homes through the 2020s runs counter to the state's climate targets.

REDUCE THE COST OF NEW HOUSING

The state's housing affordability crisis demands that we make every effort to reduce building costs. Developers can save tens of thousands of dollars in up front costs to install gas lines and on energy savings by choosing to build without gas.

Analysis in San Francisco found building a 2,500sq foot all-electric home would reduce building costs by \$12,500 compared to a home that uses gas - and that the resident would save over \$9,000 over the lifetime of the home on lower energy bills.

BUILD MORE HOUSING, MORE QUICKLY

Foregoing gas hook ups allows for a faster building process.

CONTRIBUTE TO A SAFER CALIFORNIA

To make good on Gov. Newsom's promise to close the dangerous Aliso Canyon gas storage facility - and to protect residents living near other facilities like Playa del Rey - we must lower gas demand. A code that continues the expansion of the gas system and drives up demand continues to allow these communities to be in harm's way.

The infrastructure required to deliver gas to homes is a constant safety threat - especially in earthquake prone California. In the 1994 Northridge 6.7-magnitude earthquake, 50% of the fires were caused by gas.

We should be focused on reducing these risks - not making them worse by adding MORE gas infrastructure.

What can you do?

- Sign on to a letter to the California Energy Commission highlighting your organization's support for gas-free homes.
- Join the coalition and get more involved in the campaign.