

# Consumer Engagement in Energy Codes

**Consumers Union**

Stacy Weisfeld, Campaign Organizer



# Consumers Union

- Public policy division of Consumer Reports
- Work to change legislation and the marketplace in favor of the consumer interest
  - Sustainable purchasing
  - Food and product safety
  - Affordable healthcare
  - Finance reform
  - Etc.
- Unbiased and accepts no outside advertising

# Why Energy Codes?

- Help consumers distinguish good products from bad
- A home is one of the largest, most meaningful purchases a consumer makes
- Affects many consumer issues:
  - Home quality and comfort
  - Energy costs and homeowner debt
  - Environmental health, inside and outside the home

# What are energy codes?



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Minimum standards for energy efficiency in new and renovated residential and commercial buildings.

- Energy performance baseline
- Part of overall building code adopted by state and local governments

# Survey:

The public wants energy efficiency!

# Consumers Union/Building Codes Assistance Project Survey:

- 5,086 Internet respondents
- 50% Males/ 50% Females; Aged 18+; About 2/3 own homes
- Most (79%) purchased their homes more than 2 years ago and don't have near-term plans to buy another home.
- Most (84%) had an annual HH income of \$79K or less.
- Most had average monthly energy bills of \$100-\$199.

# Respondents divided into regions

## Northeast:

1. *New England - ME, NH, VT, MA, RI, CT*
2. *Mid-Atlantic - NY, PA, NJ*

## Midwest:

1. *East North Central - WI, MI, IL, IN, OH*
2. *West North Central - MO, ND, SD, NE, KS, MN, IA*

## South:

1. *South Atlantic: DE, MD, DC, VA, WV, NC, SC, GA, FL*
2. *East South Central: KY, TN, MS, AL*
3. *West South Central: OK, TX, AK, LA*

## West:

- *Mountain: ID, MT, WY, NV, UT, CO, AZ, NM*
- *Pacific: AL, WA, OR, CA, HA*

# Statement Prior to Survey

Energy codes are minimum requirements that builders must meet to ensure that homes meet energy efficiency standards.



# Findings: Key Points for Policymakers

A majority of consumers agree that:

- **Homeowners have a right to a home that meets minimum energy efficiency standards (82%)**
- Energy codes ensure that homeowner and taxpayer dollars are used wisely and efficiently by requiring that new homes will be “built right the first time” (74%)
- **Energy codes add to the purchase price of a new home and effectively lower monthly operating costs (69%)**
- Energy codes should be enforced like other safety and quality standards of construction (75%)
- **Energy codes stimulate the economy and create green jobs (55%)**
- Energy codes reduce the need for more power plants in my community (56%)

# Results disprove common arguments

**Argument:** Homebuyer not willing to pay extra upfront costs

**Survey:** 79% would rather pay slightly more for a new home and have affordable, predictable operating costs and energy bills

**Argument:** Homebuyer only cares about aesthetics

- **Survey:** 79% say that disclosure of a home's energy usage would enable them to make an informed decision about a new home purchase

# The public does not agree that:

- Amenities of new homes have to be sacrificed in exchange for energy codes compliance. (77%)
- **Energy code compliance creates administrative hassles for builders and negatively impacts the rate of new home construction. (65%)**
- Home builders should save money on construction by making homes less energy efficient (73%)

# Other findings:

- Energy codes would help my energy bills be more affordable and predictable (71%)
- **Energy codes help make homes more comfortable to live in (68%)**
- Energy code standards will help to ensure quality home construction(70%)
- **Energy codes add to the purchase price of new homes but lower the operating cost (69%)**
- Energy codes protect homeowners and renters from excessive energy costs (70%)
- **More energy efficient buildings will reduce energy use and pollution (84%)**

# CU and BCAP Materials

## ENERGY CODES:

What Consumers Need to Know



You have a right to a home that meets national standards for energy efficiency!



Energy Codes design and construction of the overall state or local

**BUILDING! IMPORTANT!**

**SAVE YOU!** Buying a home will cost you much less

Energy codes ensure construction which is

**PRO!** By following energy codes, you can

## ENERGY CODES:

What Advocates Need to Know



We don't often think about how much energy used in buildings impacts society. Yet buildings account for over 40 percent of total energy use in the United States—more than either the transportation or industrial sectors.

Energy Codes are minimum requirements for efficient design and construction for new and renovated residential and commercial buildings. They form part of the overall building code that is adopted by state and local governments.

### BUILDING ENERGY CODES ARE IMPORTANT BECAUSE THEY:

#### REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION AND GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS

Most buildings waste energy needlessly, which is a serious problem, because over one-third of total US greenhouse gas emissions come from the building sector. Adopting and enforcing energy codes will reduce building energy consumption, and help mitigate the impacts of climate change. In addition, it will...

#### SAVE CONSUMERS MONEY

The average U.S. home spends about \$2,125 on energy bills each year. Meanwhile, in 2008, the commercial sector spent an estimated \$183 billion on non-renewable energy expenditures. Energy efficient buildings reduce utility bills and put money back into consumers' and companies' pockets. Millions of additional dollars could then be used to...



## HOME ENERGY CODE GUIDE:

A Consumer Guide to Minimum Standards for Energy Efficiency



If you are interested in purchasing a quality home—or want to learn more about how to make your home more energy efficient—this checklist provides a quick way to assess energy efficiency. It provides information on national minimum energy efficiency requirements based on the International Energy Conservation Code.

When builders details, it's a good idea to have a home energy audit performed.



This compact fluorescent light bulb (CFL) can save energy.

## HOME ENERGY CODE CHECKLIST:



If you are interested in buying a home or want to learn about the energy code and how to make your home more energy efficient, this checklist provides a quick way to assess energy performance and identify opportunities to improve energy efficiency.

This checklist helps you spot check for national minimum requirements set forth in the 2009 International Energy Conservation code. While this checklist doesn't include every requirement, it will help you assess a new home and make an informed decision about the quality of construction and the likelihood that the home will use energy efficiently.

### ENERGY CERTIFICATE

- Energy Certificate located on circuit breaker box is completed and signed. See reverse side for examples and more details.

### AIR SEALING

- All holes between floors and through walls have been sealed with caulk or foam. Examples include:
  - Where phone cable wires enter the house
  - Where plumbing goes through walls, floors, and ceiling

### THERMOSTAT

- If a forced air heating system is being installed, the home has a programmable thermostat.

### DUCTS

- IN ATTIC:**
  - Ceiling and walls are insulated, or
  - Ducts are sealed and insulated to a value of R-8

### WHOLE HOUSE:

- All ducts are sealed with mastic

### LIGHTING

- At least half of the home's light fixtures have high efficiency lights

### FIREPLACE

- The fireplace doors are sealed with gaskets

### INSULATION

- Crawl space walls and/or the crawl space ceiling are properly insulated
- Access hatch or door is weather-stripped and insulated

### WINDOWS

- Windows and skylights meet the minimum requirements for U-factors and SHGCs. Visit: [www.efficienwindows.org/code\\_savvyiew.cfm](http://www.efficienwindows.org/code_savvyiew.cfm) for minimums in your climate zone
- EXISTING HOMES:** Evaluate windows for age, quality and air tightness

### TESTS

- A blower door test resulted in a score of seven air changes per hour (ACH) or less, if applicable
- The blower tested ducts for air leakage

### ALTERNATIVE COMPLIANCE PATH

- If these requirements are not met, ask your contractor for documentation showing the home meets minimum standards for energy consumption.

# BUYING A NEW HOME? REMODELING?

Make sure it's built right.

**You could be buying a home that will be uncomfortable and waste money!**

With colder weather coming, you may be dreading rising utility bills and uncomfortable drafts in your home.

When homes are built or remodeled, builders are supposed to construct them according to regulations set by energy codes, which are minimum requirements for energy efficiency.

Energy efficient homes use less energy, resulting in lower utility bills and a more comfortable home, as well as environmental benefits. A home built to the model code can save you \$200 every year.

Talk to your builder. Make sure your home meets the state or local energy code!

For more information on home energy efficiency and to see if your home meets the code, please visit [agreenerfuture.org](http://agreenerfuture.org).

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# HOMEOWNERS WANT ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES!

Protect your customers.

**Please ensure that their home meets 2009 IECC.**

82% of consumers surveyed\* believe that homeowners should have a right to a home that meets national energy standards. 79% said that they would rather pay slightly more for a new home and have affordable, predictable operating costs and energy bills.

Every dollar spent on energy efficiency upgrades in a home yields \$6 in savings!† A home built to the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code will save homeowners hundreds of dollars a year on their utility bills, make their home more comfortable, and help the environment.

Most homeowners expect that their home is being built to a high energy efficiency standard and associate energy efficiency with high quality construction. Please protect your customers and help ensure that their home meets 2009 IECC.

For more consumer information, please visit [agreenerfuture.org/codes](http://agreenerfuture.org/codes). And for more information on how to build to the latest Energy Code, please visit [www.nhenergycode.com](http://www.nhenergycode.com).

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\*Survey of 5,000 consumers conducted by Consumer Reports, 2011  
†GDS Associates



# HOME BUYERS WANT ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES!

Show off a home's energy efficient qualities.

**It's what consumers want!**

79% of consumers surveyed said that they would rather pay slightly more for a new home and have affordable, predictable operating costs and energy bills. 82% believe that homeowners should have a right to a home that meets national energy standards.\*

What are the selling points of an energy efficient home? Superior quality of construction, year-round comfort, improved air quality, lower energy costs, mortgage savings, and higher resale value potential. Just to name a few.\*\*

For more consumer information, please visit [agreenerfuture.org/codes](http://agreenerfuture.org/codes). And for more information on home energy efficient features, please visit [www.nhenergycode.com](http://www.nhenergycode.com).

\*Survey of 5,000 consumers conducted by Consumer Reports, 2011  
\*\*GDS Associates

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# A GREENER ENERGY FUTURE

Working for clean, renewable, affordable energy

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Trouble in Indiana. Hospital errors report aims to help patients - Post-Tribune http://t.co/zoMhPU50 #ptsafety 18 hours ago

## Build Better, Live Better. *Know your energy rights!*

MAINE MICHIGAN NEW HAMPSHIRE OHIO



Please use our publications to learn more:

For Consumers:

For Professionals:



Consumer Guide



Home Guide



Home Checklist



Professional Handout



Consumer Handout



For Advocates

If you are interested in receiving hard copies of any of these resources, please contact [Stacy Weisfeld](#) for more information.

**\*We are encouraging professionals and advocates to distribute the consumer handout to the public. We would like to see them in as many office buildings, lobbies, libraries, community centers and other locations as possible!**

# State Outreach

- Ohio
  - Support adoption of 2009 International Energy Conservation Code
  - Testified before Residential Construction Advisory Committee
  - Call-to-action
  - Media tour
- Maine
  - Support adoption of Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code
  - Educational materials
  - Consumer messaging for local outreach
- New Hampshire
  - Educational materials in Field Guides, libraries, home shows and trainings
- Minnesota
  - Comprehensive, long-term consumer outreach plan to be replicated in other states
- Michigan
  - Educational materials for trainings and other outreach



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Thanks to our partners at BCAP, Kelly Guhanick, Maureen Guttman and  
Maria Ellingson.