Consumer Engagement in Energy Codes

Consumers Union
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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?

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

We don't often think about how much energy used in buildings impacts society. Yet buildings account for over one-third of total energy use in the United States—more than either the transportation or the electric sector.

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
  - Similar to a person who exercises, the building must exercise to sustain its energy consumption, and the stronger it is, the less energy it uses.

- SAVE CONSUMERS MONEY
  - The average U.S. home spends about $1,300 on energy bills each year. Meanwhile, in 2006, the Colorado New Homes Program estimated that for every 1% increase in energy efficiency, energy-efficient building reduces utility bills and put money back into consumers, and companies, pockets. Millions of additional dollars could be saved.


HOME ENERGY CODE CHECKLIST:

- **Energy Certificate**
  - An Energy Certificate is an official document that verifies the building's energy performance. It provides a quick way to assess energy efficiency and compare properties.

- **Insulation**
  - Attic, crawl space, and basement insulation are required in new homes.

- **Windows**
  - Windows and skylights meet a minimum standard for energy efficiency.

- **Ducts**
  - Ducts are insulated and sealed to prevent air leakage.

- **Lighting**
  - Uses LED or other high-efficiency light bulbs.

- **Fireplace**
  - Airtight or sealed with gas.

- **Recessed Lighting**
  - Uses LED or other high-efficiency light bulbs.

- **Front Door**
  - Airtight with gas.

- **Roof**
  - Insulated and sealed to prevent air leakage.

- **Garage Doors**
  - Airtight with gas.

- **Hot Water**
  - Use a high-efficiency water heater.

- **Plumbing**
  - Uses low-flow fixtures.

- **Plumbing Fixtures**
  - Uses low-flow fixtures.

- **Heating and Cooling**
  - Uses high-efficiency heating and cooling systems.

- **HVAC**
  - High-efficiency HVAC systems are required in new homes.

- **Plumbing Fixtures**
  - Uses low-flow fixtures.

- **Ducts**
  - Ducts are insulated and sealed to prevent air leakage.

- **Lighting**
  - Uses LED or other high-efficiency light bulbs.

ALTERNATIVE COMPLIANCE PATH:

- **Energy Star**
  - Follows Energy Star guidelines.

- **LEED Certification**
  - Meets LEED standards.

- **BAM**
  - Meets BAM standards.
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 money 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.

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HOMEOWNERS WANT ENERGY EFFICIENT HOMES!

Protect your customers.
Please ensure that their home meets 2009 IECC.

82% of consumers surveyed¹ 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 can save you 60 cents in utility savings. 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. For more information on home energy efficient features, please visit www.rhenergycode.com.

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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. For more information on home energy efficient features, please visit www.rhenergycode.com.

*Survey of 5,000 consumers conducted by consumer reports, 2011
**GSA Associates

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Working for clean, renewable, affordable energy

Build Better, Live Better.  Know your energy rights!
MAINE  MICHIGAN  NEW HAMPSHIRE  OHIO

Please use our publications to learn more:

For Consumers:
- Consumer Guide
- Home Guide
- Home Checklist

For Professionals:
- 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
  – 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.