



2023 Updated MA Residential Stretch Code Summary

Background and Introduction

Massachusetts has recently revamped its energy stretch code to make it more energy efficient. 300 cities and towns in Massachusetts currently follow the stretch code through their Green Community designation by the Department of Energy Resources.¹ All buildings permitted on or after January 1, 2023 must follow the new stretch code requirements.² What does this mean for cities and towns who follow the stretch code? This resource will summarize all new provisions and changes in the 2023 update to the Massachusetts energy stretch code for residential buildings.

New Requirements

HERS Index Reduction: One of the pathways to compliance is a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) rating, which is a points-based rating system used to quantify overall energy use, similar to a miles-per-gallon sticker on a car. A HERS 100 is equivalent to a new home constructed in 2006 from the perspective of energy use, and the lower the score the better. The required HERS Index for compliance is HERS 42 if the building is using fossil fuels, or HERS 45 if the building is all electric.³

New Ventilation Requirements: An energy recovery ventilator (ERV) or heat recovery ventilator (HRV) is required to meet whole home ventilation requirements of the code. These systems are more effective than traditional exhaust-only ventilation systems (such as a bath fan) because they provide supply air from the outside and also remove stale air from the home, which effectively balances the flow of the system and improves indoor air quality.

Electric Vehicle Readiness: For single family homes, one parking space is required to be electric vehicle (EV) ready, which means it shall be wired to accommodate future electric vehicle use. For multifamily homes, 20 percent of parking spots shall be EV Ready.

Existing Building Upgrades: The HERS Index required for alterations, additions, and change-of-use is lowered from a HERS 65 to a HERS 52 if the home is using fossil fuels, a HERS 55 if the home is all electric or using solar PV, or a HERS 58 if it is both all electric and using solar PV. This will allow for more efficient existing building upgrades.

Passive House Design Pathway: There is a new optional compliance pathway via Passive House Institute US (PHIUS), or Passive House International (PHI), which requires a home to meet Phius CORE 2021, PhiusZERO 2021, or PHI. Passive House is a holistic approach to durability, high air quality, occupant comfort, and energy savings.

¹ Municipalities can choose to follow the stretch code even if they are not in the Green Communities Program

² Except for the HERS Rating Path which has an interim requirement that changes on July 1, 2024

³ The interim requirements prior to July 1, 2024 are HERS 52 for buildings using fossil fuels, HERS 55 for buildings generating solar or are all-electric, or HERS 58 if they are both generating solar and all-electric.