

## Background

In an effort to make homes in Utah more energy efficient, the Uniform Building Code Commission has been considering updates to the state's building code to bring new home construction and remodels in line with the most current energy-saving standards. The standards, set forth by the 2009 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), already apply to commercial buildings in the state, but would also apply to residential buildings—homes, and condos and apartments three stories high or less—if the legislature ultimately decides to make the code law. Residential buildings in Utah are currently subject to the 2006 IECC, the previous version of the code.

## Key Differences Between Existing Code and 2009 IECC

- 50 percent of lighting must be high-efficiency
- Increased wall and water pipe insulation
- Improved duct sealing (leaky ducts use more energy to heat and cool the home)
- Improved building envelope (reduced energy loss through building walls)
- Third party testing and verification that home meets specific code requirements.

## Energy and Homes in Utah

Homes in Utah today are not built to the latest energy-saving standards. Families are unnecessarily spending hundreds of dollars each year on higher energy bills because their homes aren't as efficient as they could be. Cost-effective measures already exist to prevent such waste, but strong codes are needed to ensure that Utahans are the beneficiaries of energy saving improvements.

- Energy costs are the single biggest expense of home ownership after mortgage and insurance. Ensuring homes are energy-efficient makes home ownership more affordable by keeping energy costs down.
- Electricity prices in Utah have risen 4 percent to 5 percent each year for the last 10 years, according to data from the Utah Public Service Commission. Ensuring homes and other buildings are built to the latest efficiency standards will lower homeowners' exposure to rising energy costs and volatile energy markets.
- Homeowners would save an average of **\$175.16 per year** on a home built to the 2009 IECC, compared to one built to the 2006 code, even after accounting for any higher mortgage price associated with the energy upgrades, according to an analysis by the Uniform Building Code Commission's Energy Ad Hoc Committee. According to an analysis by the U.S. Department of Energy Building Energy Codes Program, homeowners would save even more—between **\$216 and \$265 per year**—with 2009 codes in place.
- Saving electricity costs a fraction of what it costs to make it. It costs Rocky Mountain Power between 6 cents and 14 cents to generate one kilowatt-hour of power through new energy resources, but only 2.5 cents to save one kilowatt-hour through efficiency, according to the utility. Energy efficiency, therefore, allows utilities to meet energy demand at the lowest cost to consumers, especially important as Rocky Mountain Power (which serves approximately 85 percent of Utah) predicts an energy resource shortfall of 1,500 megawatts in 2018—

equivalent to two large coal-fired power plants, according to RMP's 2008 Integrated Resource Plan.

- Meeting 2009 IECC standards wouldn't be difficult. In fact, 37 percent of all new homes in Utah already exceed existing code by 15 percent, due only to consumer demand for efficient homes. Passing the updated code will give all Utahans access to the benefits many have been enjoying all along.
- Incorporating energy efficiency into a home as it's built is far cheaper than retrofitting the home later. According to the Utah Weatherization Assistance Program, the average cost of retrofitting a home is \$4,800, while the cost to comply with the 2009 IECC during construction would be only \$983. Rocky Mountain Power Vice President Carol Hunter agrees it's best to build right from the start: *"Let's do it right the first time—improving and enhancing the codes and ensuring the state and local governments have the ability to enforce those codes, so that in 10 years we're not going back to work on homes built today."*
- Utah families can't see energy efficiency in action. They trust that a building is constructed to keep energy use and utility costs low. The 2009 IECC contains consumer protection provisions to verify that a home will perform as expected.

**Additional Interview Source:**

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Brad Peacock is co-founder of DwellTek, a Utah-based company specializing in energy efficiency and alternative energy in the home.

**Links to More Information:**

Utah Clean Energy:

<http://utahcleanenergy.org/>

State by state DOE analysis of 2009 IECC impacts on residential buildings:

[http://www.iccsafe.org/Communities/Energy/Documents/IECC2009\\_Residential\\_Nationwide\\_Analysis1.pdf](http://www.iccsafe.org/Communities/Energy/Documents/IECC2009_Residential_Nationwide_Analysis1.pdf)

Current status of Utah energy codes:

[http://www.energycodes.gov/states/state\\_info.php?stateAB=UT](http://www.energycodes.gov/states/state_info.php?stateAB=UT)