Maine Energy Code FAQ

August 2026

As of April 2025, Maine has an updated energy code based on the 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) that applies to all new residential and commercial construction – including major renovations. This serves as the state's base energy code and comprises Chapter Seven of the Maine Uniform Building and Energy Code (MUBEC). The MUBEC consists of eight chapters based on national model codes published by the International Code Council (ICC) and the American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), with Maine amendments.

In addition, the state is required to adopt a stretch code (MRSA 9722 6.O), which gives cities and towns the choice of opting for more advanced energy efficiency and resilience requirements.

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Here are answers to commonly asked questions to assist builders, designers, and other interested parties looking for implementation guidance. For additional details, please contact your local code enforcement office.

What is the Maine Office of Community Affairs (MOCA) and does it support building energy codes?

MOCA is a newly created government office that houses seven pre-existing state programs involving building codes, coastal management, and climate resilience, as well as land use, housing, and flood plain planning. Before they were absorbed by MOCA in fall 2025, building codes activities were housed under the Department of Public Safety Office of the State Fire Marshall.

How were the state's new base and stretch energy codes chosen?

State law requires that MUBEC incorporates the most recent edition or second most recent edition of the ICC (MRSA 9722 6.B). The Technical Building Codes and Standards Board (the Board) oversees this process.

Before the latest update, Maine's base energy code was modeled on the 2015 IECC. The state's optional stretch code was modeled on the 2021 IECC.

In updating those standards, the Board chose to use the newest model code available at the time, the 2021 IECC, as the model for the state's new base energy code, ensuring new homes and renovated buildings will be built with more efficient materials and techniques.

Maine's stretch code is a voluntary option for communities that want to enact more advanced energy efficiency measures. The communities that have adopted it are Portland and South Portland.

Beginning in 2022, a Technical Advisory Group (TAG) was convened to update the stretch code. At the time of adoption, the 2021 IECC was the most recent model code, as the 2024 version had not yet been released. The group weighed a variety of factors before recommending to the Board that the stretch code be defined using building envelope performance. This decision was arrived at through a preference to avoid metrics that are costly or difficult to access in Maine such as Home Energy Rating System (HERS) ratings.

What does the stretch code require?

The stretch code applies to both residential and commercial projects in participating communities of Portland and South Portland.

The residential stretch code states that the project's heat loss (i.e. Total Building U-factor x Area, or UA), calculated as outlined in R402.1.5, shall exceed the UA requirements by at least 15 percent over a code compliant project. This means that the Envelope PASSES design by 15 percent better (or more) than code per the REScheck compliance calculation. See information below about the custom REScheck specifically for use in Maine. To encourage electrification, the requirement is reduced to a minimum of 10 percent for residential projects that do not include fossil fuels for any primary use (heating, cooling, hot water, backup heat, cooking, etc.). This electrification incentive allows for the use of fossil fuels for backup power generation.

The commercial stretch code states that the Total Building UA for the project, calculated as outlined in C402.1.5, shall exceed the UA requirements by at least 15 percent over a code compliant project. This means that the Envelope PASSES design by 15 percent better (or more) than code per the COMcheck compliance calculation.

How can new homes meet the base code's air leakage standards?

Under the residential base code, a building must have an air leakage rate less than 3 air changes per hour at 50 Pascals. The key to meeting this requirement is having a continuous air barrier with no gaps or openings that would allow leakage through the building's thermal envelope.

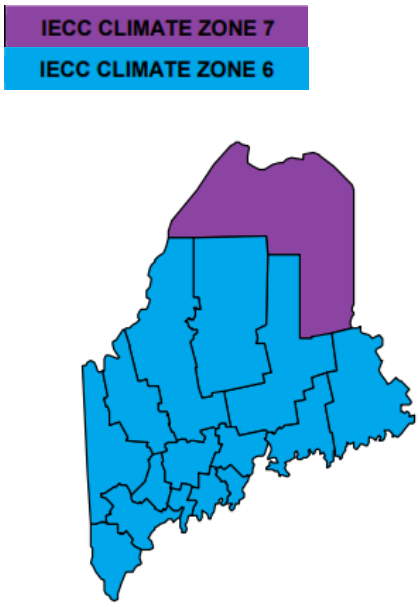
There are various ways to comply with this requirement. The industry standard is a performance-based Home Energy Rating System (HERS) test. Other approaches include using prescribed materials, or a combination of prescribed materials and approved assembly techniques. Air barriers can be constructed in a few different ways. Airtight exterior membranes can serve as an air barrier. Spray foam insulation and sheathing can also be used as an air barrier if all seams are taped, and transitions from windows and door openings are well-executed.

Are all new houses and major renovations required to pass a blower door test?

Yes, the residential base code requires one blower door test to measure the home's air leakage. Some builders prefer to schedule a test while they can still access the home's air barrier and repair any flaws in the building's airtightness, while others choose to do this at the end of the project.

Does the code require mechanical ventilation?

Yes, the updated code requires all new homes and major renovations to have mechanical ventilation. Most of Maine is in climate zone 6, where exhaust-only systems are allowed. In climate zone 7 (Aroostook County only), the code references IECC 2024 R403.6.1, which requires Heat Recovery Ventilation (HRV) or Energy Recovery Ventilation (ERV) systems, which draw in fresh air and save energy by limiting the loss of heat or cooling.



How do homes demonstrate that they meet the updated base and stretch codes?

Compliance can be met through the prescriptive pathway, the performance pathway, or the Energy Rating Index (ERI) pathway. Under the prescriptive pathway, compliance can be met in one of three ways: by meeting the minimum R-values, using the maximum U-factor assembly table, or through the Total UA alternative. To meet the performance pathway, a building must include certain elements listed in Table R405.2 and meet specified solar heat gain coefficient and cost metrics. To meet the ERI pathway, a building must include certain elements and have an ERI under a certain threshold, which is defined based on climate zone. ERI ratings must be verified by a third party, usually a Home Energy Rating System (HERS) rater.

How do Maine's residential amendments to the base code affect builders and contractors using the prescriptive compliance pathway?

Maine amended the residential base code to increase the minimum R-values for walls in the prescriptive compliance pathway to address concerns around dewpoint and moisture within walls. While the 2021 IECC allows R-30 or R-20 + 5ci or R-13 + 10ci or 0 + 20ci wall assemblies, the Board made the following changes:

CLIMATE ZONE	WOOD FRAME WALL *R*-VALUE[g]
6	30 or 20 +10ci or 13 + 15ci or 0 + 20ci
7 and 8	30 or 20 +10ci or 13 + 15ci or 0 + 20ci

Compliance with Maine's residential base code may be calculated in REScheck. The Department of Energy developed a custom version of REScheck specifically for use with the Maine base and stretch codes.

When and why does REScheck flag that "Dew point calculation is required"?

An important distinction is that Maine amended the R402.1.3 R-value alternative table to require R-10 continuous insulation, but because this amendment was created to address dewpoint concerns, and not insulation concerns, Maine did not amend the R402.1.2 U-factor table. Therefore, a project with less than R-10 ci can pass REScheck (because REScheck is based on the U-factor table), **without actually complying** with the Maine code. REScheck flags this when it "Passes" the project — that the Pass is **conditional upon the applicant providing a dewpoint calculation from a professional.**

Are the other, non-prescriptive compliance pathways affected by Maine's amendments?

No. Maine's residential amendments apply only to the prescriptive compliance pathway.

Does a residential dormer addition to an existing building trigger stretch code requirements?

A residential dormer addition to an existing building will only trigger stretch code requirements if the floor area under the dormer is greater than 100 square feet. On August 21, 2025, the TBCSB voted to include a modification to exempt residential dormers under 100 square feet.

Does the base code apply to a project in a community with a population of less than 4,000 people.

The base code applies to all buildings constructed or renovated in Maine regardless of the municipal population. Enforcement activities may vary by municipality. Any municipality with a population of 4,000 residents or greater must enforce it. If the population is under 4,000, the municipality may choose whether to enforce the code. Please verify with your local municipal code office.

How is the state helping builders implement the new code?

Throughout 2025 and 2026, the newly created Maine Department of Energy Resources (DOER) – formerly the Governor's Energy Office (GEO) – has funded in-person energy code training sessions held throughout the state led by the nonprofit passivhausMAINE. These trainings teach new and experienced builders how to meet the state's building and health codes and understand the best practices for building long-lasting, code-compliant structures.

Visit this page for a full list of upcoming training dates and locations and check back for updates.