



# Frequently Asked Questions

## About the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) 2021

### What is the IECC?

The International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) is considered America's 'model building energy code' because it is the basis for nearly every state's residential and commercial energy code. It is updated every three years to keep up-to-date with modern technology and building practices. The next update is for 2021 and will be voted on in 2019. The IECC helps assure that new buildings, or those undergoing major renovation, are more durable, safe, and affordable. The process for developing the IECC is administered by the International Code Council (ICC), a member association with over 64,000 members. According to the ICC, "it is dedicated to developing model codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes." (Learn more about the ICC here: [www.iccsafe.org/about-icc/overview/about-international-code-council](http://www.iccsafe.org/about-icc/overview/about-international-code-council).)

### How would the IECC translate into code in Massachusetts?

Since individual Massachusetts communities cannot adopt their own building codes, the international codes (I-Codes) directly affect cities and towns. The Board of Building Regulations and Standards (BBRS) is the state board that adopts new versions of the I-codes and approves Massachusetts-specific code amendments to update the state building code. The BBRS is mandated to review and adopt new versions of the IECC, so the 2021 will largely become Massachusetts state code after it is published.

### How impactful could a pro-efficient 2021 IECC be?

A pro-efficiency IECC would positively impact energy efficiency nationwide. The building code primarily affects new construction. Making buildings more energy efficient from the start takes considerably less time, cost, and effort than making up those energy savings post-construction. Since buildings on average last for 50-100 years, a pro-efficiency IECC is an investment in our long-term energy and climate future.

Over the past two code cycles, we saw slim gains in energy efficiency above the previous code (<1%) whereas previous cycles had gained 15% and 18% in efficiency over the codes before them. With the 2021 code cycle, we have the opportunity to get back on track.

Over 500 proposals were submitted for the 2021 IECC, and we will not know until the fall exactly which proposals will make it through the ICC's vetting process on which to be voted. MAPC has partnered with the Energy Efficient Codes Coalition (EECC), which will be putting together a voting guide to help municipalities assess the energy efficiency impacts of individual proposals. One proposal we are excited about is an optional pathway for net zero. Codifying options for energy efficiency beyond what is required could help Massachusetts find vetted language to use for stretch code updates. More on our partners at the EECC here: [energyefficientcodes.org](http://energyefficientcodes.org).



## **Is the IECC really important for Stretch Code communities since it would affect the Base Building Energy Code?**

Yes, a more efficient IECC has impacts for stretch code communities for three reasons. One is that the Stretch Code language that we use as a state is based off of the IECC language, and so if there are more energy efficient provisions codified in the IECC, these can more easily be adopted into our state code. The second way this impacts the Stretch Code is in the spirit of where the IECC is headed. The BBRP pays attention to the development of future cycles of code before they are formally adopted statewide, and so when there is efficiency language in a code like the ASHRAE 2019 or the 2021 IECC, we can make the argument that they should be in the Stretch Code a little ahead of schedule. Lastly, the current Stretch Code is embedded within the Base Building Energy Code, and many of the provisions that govern how new buildings and major renovations occur in that base code are required of Stretch Code communities. We expect that to continue increasingly in the future.

## **How is the Stretch Code impacted if the IECC improves the Base Code? What if the Base Code surpasses the Stretch Code?**

The BBRP is mandated to update the state base code with each I-Code cycle, but there is no mandate to update the Stretch Energy Code on a pre-determined timeline. This has meant that the Base Code has largely caught up to the Stretch Code in terms of energy efficiency. The Stretch Code is currently based off of the 2015 IECC and ASHRAE 2013, whereas the Base Code is due to update to the 2018 IECC this year. Yet, remember that the current Stretch Code is embedded within the Base Building Energy Code. A better base building energy code is better for base code AND stretch code communities, since many of the provisions that govern how new buildings and major renovations occur in that base code and are thus required of Stretch Code communities too.

## **Will a more efficient 2021 IECC make constructing or renovating buildings so expensive that my community will be at a disadvantage?**

Because the international code cycle has a three year time-lag built into it, it signals to the Massachusetts market where the state code will be heading in the future and helps developers prepare for the types of buildings they will be constructing. Massachusetts communities do not have individual building codes, and the majority of New England states have been adopting new versions of the IECC at a similar pace to Massachusetts, so builders and developers should expect to see relatively consistent code adoption across communities nearby.

Energy efficient buildings are not currently prohibitively expensive, or significantly more expensive to build, and the cost of developing high-efficient buildings is anticipated to decrease over time as the markets for technologies mature. Efficient buildings help residents and other end users to save money on their utility bills, so the return on investment and savings over time are significant benefits for owners and users of high performing buildings.

## **Who can sign up and what are the deadlines?**

According to the International Code Council's by-laws, the following people are eligible to register as ICC members and vote on the IECC: "Voting Representatives must be employees or officials of that Governmental Member and are actively engaged full or part-time in the administration, formulation or enforcement of laws, regulations or ordinances relating to public health, safety and welfare." Examples of



Governmental Members are a Planning, Sustainability, or Inspectional Services Department or Mayor's Office. A municipality has no limit to the number of Governmental Members it can register, but they must be registered by March 29, 2019. Voting will occur in the second half of November 2019, with exact dates for the two-week window set as the dates approach. Membership dues per Governmental Member range from \$135 to \$370, and are dependent on the size of the municipality. Much more on these questions can be found at MAPC's Building Codes for Climate webpage (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/building-codes-climate/>) and this handout we develop to help municipal staff participate in the IECC: ([www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MAPC-EECC\\_How-to-participate-in-the-2021-IECC\\_FINAL\\_2-14-19.pdf](http://www.mapc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/MAPC-EECC_How-to-participate-in-the-2021-IECC_FINAL_2-14-19.pdf))

### **How do I sign up for a membership?**

First you want to make an account on the ICC website, which you can do here: <https://shop.iccsafe.org/customer/account/create/>

After you've set up your account, sign in to the site with your password and e-mail address and then you can select a membership option and apply online for a governmental membership for your department here: <https://www.iccsafe.org/membership/join-icc/>

If you would prefer to use a check, you can use print out the PDF version of the application (Located here: [https://cdn-web.iccsafe.org/wp-content/uploads/Government\\_Membership\\_App.pdf](https://cdn-web.iccsafe.org/wp-content/uploads/Government_Membership_App.pdf)) and mail it to International Code Council, Attention Member Services, 900 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL 35213-1206.

Whether you submit online or by mail, you should anticipate waiting 3 business days for the membership to be approved.

Once your membership is approved, you will be able to sign into the ICC site again, go to "My ICC" and submit your name as the primary representative as well as other voters within your department for voter validation. Instructions for this will also be e-mailed to you when your membership is approved.

The Massachusetts Climate Action Network (MCAN) has recorded a brief video of the Boston City Council registering for the ICC, which can provide a guide for the registration process. Locate the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jBP4LZUU2Ck&feature=youtu.be>

### **How can I contact the International Code Council?**

You can call 888-422-7233 and press 0 to speak to a representative directly.

### **How can I get more help from MAPC?**

Visit MAPC's Building Codes for Climate webpage (<https://www.mapc.org/resource-library/building-codes-climate/>). You can also email MAPC Clean Energy Coordinator, Nicole Sanches, at [nsanches@mapc.org](mailto:nsanches@mapc.org). In addition, Nicole has made available appointments for one-on-one technical assistance for municipal staff. Appointments before the registration deadline of March 29, 2019 can be made here: <https://calendly.com/nsanches/30>