

Local Adoption of the 2025 California Building Standards Code and Amendments to Title 18 Buildings and Construction

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Background and Purpose

- California updates Title 24 (Building Standards Code) every three years.
- By state law the 2025 codes take effect January 1, 2026.
- The County may make more restrictive changes or modifications to the Code through local amendments with express findings that the changes or modifications are “reasonably necessary because of local climate, geological or topographical conditions.”
- Staff proposes readopting prior local amendments for fire and seismic safety.



Findings Required For Code Changes

- Unique Local Geologic/Topographic, Climatic, and Environmental Conditions.
- Monterey County local amendments meet the intention of Assembly Bill 306 due to:
 - Steep terrain, canyons, and fault zones that could delay emergency response.
 - High wildfire exposure in WUI areas.
 - Liquefaction and seismic risk in Salinas Valley.
 - Topography and vegetation require enhanced life-safety protection.



State and Local Amendments

Updates included by State Agencies:

- Update of all CA Codes.
- Relocation of Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) requirements to standalone Part 7 of CCR Title 24.
- Generally minor revisions this adoption cycle with more steps towards building electrification and EV charging infrastructure.
- Assembly Bill 306 is a California legislative bill that imposes a moratorium on the adoption or modification of new state and local building standards affecting residential units from June 1, 2025, until June 1, 2031.
- This bill aims to bring more certainty to the home construction industry and help stem further construction cost increases.



Key Changes in 2025 Code Cycle

- **Enhanced wildfire safety:** California is adopting stricter fire-resistance standards for buildings in high-risk zones, including requiring fire-rated, ember-resistant vents.
- **Mass timber expansion:** The use of mass timber as a sustainable structural option is expanded, allowing for taller wood buildings (up to 18 stories for certain types).
- **Updated seismic design:** New seismic provisions incorporate the latest USGS data, potentially increasing design forces in high-risk areas and adding stricter requirements for structures near active faults.
- **Accessibility for EV charging:** New provisions clarify that accessible electric vehicle charging spaces are required, with specific standards for signage and space.
- **Balcony and Elevated Exterior Element Safety:** Stricter requirements for the design, inspection, materials, and waterproofing of balconies and other elevated exterior elements.
- **Heat Pumps for Space and Water Heating:** For newly constructed residential buildings, the prescriptive compliance path now mandates all-electric heat pump systems for space and water heating. While gas furnaces can still be used, they require compliance through the more complex performance method. This effectively phases out the standard installation of gas furnaces and water heaters in new homes.
- **Electric-Ready Infrastructure:** New buildings must be pre-wired for future electric appliances, including commercial kitchens, to encourage later upgrades to cleaner technologies.
- **Stricter Ventilation Standards:** Indoor air quality is improved with stronger ventilation requirements for multifamily buildings.
- **Mandatory EV chargers:** Previous "EV-Capable" standard with more stringent mandates for installing actual Level 2 EV chargers and receptacle outlets in residential buildings.
- **Construction waste management:** All projects must now have a formal construction waste management plan that includes a 65% diversion requirement.



Code Adoption Process

- CBSC adopted the 2025 Codes on or around January 1, 2025
- Codes to be published by July 1, 2025
- Codes take effect 180 days later on January 1, 2026
- County is mandated by State law to adopt the Codes
- County may amend the Codes to address local issues
- Amendments to “Building Standards” need to be justified on the basis of local geologic, topographic, climatic or environmental conditions
- All projects submitted prior to January 1, 2026 are subject to the previously adopted Codes
- All projects submitted on or after January 1, 2026 are subject to the newly adopted Codes



Codes

Model Codes:

- 2024 International Building Code (IBC)
- 2024 International Existing Building Code (IEBC)
- 2024 International Residential Code (IRC)
- 2024 International Fire Code (IFC)
- 2023 National Electrical Code (NEC)
- 2024 Uniform Mechanical Code (UMC)
- 2024 Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC)

California Code of Regulations (CCR):

- Title 19 Public Safety
- Title 24 Building Standards Code
- Title 25 Housing and Community Development



Codes

CCR Title 24 CA Building Standards Code:

- Part 1 California Administrative Code (CAC)
- Part 2 California Building Code (CBC)
- Part 2.5 California Residential Code (CRC)
- Part 3 California Electrical Code (CEC)
- Part 4 California Mechanical Code (CMC)
- Part 5 California Plumbing Code (CPC)
- Part 6 California Energy Code (CEEC)
- Part 7 California Wildland-Urban Interface Code
- Part 8 California Historical Building Code (CHBC)
- Part 9 California Fire Code (CFC)
- Part 10 California Existing Building Code (CEBC)
- Part 11 California Green Building Standards Code (CALGreen)
- Part 12 California Reference Standards Code



Recommendation

- To make express findings that County amendments to the 2025 California Building Standards Code are reasonably necessary due to local climate, geological or topographical conditions; and
- To repeal the 2022 California Building Standards Code with County amendments and adopt the 2025 California Building Standards Code with County amendments.

