

Local Building Department Enforcement of the California Energy Code

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Bay Area Regional Energy Network

A program funded by the CPUC and operated by Bay Area Counties that is increasing energy efficiency in buildings.

Four Program Areas:

1. Single Family
2. Multi Family
3. Financing
4. **Codes and Standards**

BayREN Codes and Standards

- Based on the idea that local govt. is uniquely positioned to assist local govt. implement the Energy Code.

Anecdotal Challenges to Energy Code Enforcement

- Enormous amounts of unpermitted construction
- Energy Code is complex, and not as familiar or easy to understand as other parts of the Building Code
- Local Building Departments are under-resourced and struggling to meet all of their enforcement responsibilities
- Local and State communication not great

A Few Things about Building Depts

- Most building inspection staff come from construction trades, not from an EE background
- Building Depts are funded from permit fees and general fund revenues. Both sources under constant pressure
- Building Depts were decimated during the Great Recession and many have not recovered

BayREN Research on Enforcement

BayREN observed 49 projects in 15 Bay Area jurisdictions.

Major findings included:

1. Only 16% of projects were fully compliant
 - Most common problem – field changes not plan checked
2. Half of all buildings would perform worse than indicated on approved plans
3. Even compliant projects had errors leaving room for improvement

Takeaway: EE potential of the Code is not being realized

BayREN Tools for Building Depts

- Free Classroom Training
- On-Site Consulting
- Outreach and Best Practices through Regional Forums
- Checklists and Guides for prioritizing compliance items
- Regional efforts to improve digital tools and other plan check resources, particularly for smaller jurisdictions

Other Ideas to Promote Local Energy Code Enforcement

- Develop a State-sponsored certification program for energy code compliance, similar to CASp certification
- Greater State and Local partnership around code development and implementation
- More resources provided to local building depts to fund enforcement