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## **Codes for Climate offers states and cities a path to building decarbonization**

*A new joint initiative from NBI and RMI helps states and cities advance  
building codes and policies to achieve a zero-carbon future*

**JUNE 24, 2021 (PORTLAND, OR | BOULDER, CO)**—As states and cities seek to fulfill their climate goals, it's not clear that national code-making entities will keep pace with the efficiency stringency and building decarbonization measures that are necessary. Buildings currently represent 39% of the carbon emissions in the United States from operational and embodied sources. As such, solutions for climate change must target the built environment.

New Buildings Institute (NBI) and RMI announced today a new initiative to support the development and adoption of climate-aligned new construction codes and existing building performance standards for states and cities that are advancing beyond what the national model codes are offering.

Codes for Climate<sup>™</sup> aims to deliver technical, policy, and implementation support for jurisdictions calling for Paris Agreement-aligned codes, standards, and policies to keep temperature rise under 1.5°-degrees Celsius.

“To reach the necessary emissions reductions by 2030, the industry needs a climate focused code now,” said **Michael Furze, director of Washington State Energy Office**. “Washington state has shown this work can be done, and I believe that now is the time to secure the health, economic, and resilience benefits of aligning building codes and standards with climate goals, and we support the new Codes for Climate initiative to do just that.”

National model energy codes are updated every three years and direct how new construction—both residential and commercial buildings—are designed and built to meet a minimum energy performance. Model energy codes and standards like ASHRAE 90.1 and the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) have the potential to provide steady progress to carbon neutral new construction nationwide. But experts warn that action must be taken in this next development cycle to effectively mitigate carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions by 2030.

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In order to accelerate much-needed action on the current cycle of building code updates, Codes for Climate will:

- work with multiple states and cities to provide the technical assistance needed to get climate-aligned codes;
- engage in the ASHRAE and International Code Council (ICC) development processes to ensure forward progress on carbon-based outcomes for new construction and existing building renovations; and
- develop codes and policies to meet the needs of states and cities working towards carbon-free buildings.

Codes for Climate will start with new construction, where ambitious climate-aligned codes are easiest to implement and most impactful, then move to address building performance standards and other policy options that will dramatically reduce emissions from existing buildings. Using NBI's recently released *Building Decarbonization Code* overlay to the 2021 IECC as a starting point, code language will be developed to meet the urgency of achieving a 1.5°-degrees Celsius target in new construction by 2030.

"New construction is the low-hanging fruit in mitigating greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment," said **Jacob Corvidae, a principal at RMI in Carbon-Free Buildings**. "Getting to work now on building codes that decarbonize buildings by 2030 will give cities and states a vital near-term tool in the climate fight."

Advances in the most recent three-year code cycle update have delivered energy savings--and resulting emissions reductions--of approximately 9% for residential in the IECC and 4.7 % for commercial in ASHRAE 90.1. "But this progress is neither consistent nor assured," said **NBI Director of Codes Kim Cheslak**. "We are encouraged by the actions of and are working alongside ASHRAE and the ICC to take climate change seriously, but actions of special interest groups have historically flattened progress, diverting codes from progress on the trajectory to zero," she said.

"Updated, modern, climate-aligned building codes are an essential part of the infrastructure toolkit, reducing greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, a leading, but hard to address, carbon emitter," said **Doreen Harris, president and CEO, New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)**. "The Codes for Climate effort will further mitigate carbon pollution and help New York achieve the greenhouse gas reductions set forth in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act," Harris added.

Codes for Climate is an initiative founded by NBI and RMI, nonprofit organizations working to reduce the climate impacts from the built environment through decarbonization strategies such as energy efficiency, electrification, reductions in embodied carbon and renewable generation integration. To learn more about Codes for Climate, visit <https://www.codesforclimate.org/>.

### **ABOUT NEW BUILDINGS INSTITUTE (NBI)**

New Buildings Institute (NBI) is a trusted, independent nonprofit organization with a mission to push for better buildings that achieve zero energy, zero carbon, and beyond—through research, policy, guidance, and market transformation—to protect people and the planet. For more than 20 years, NBI has worked collaboratively with industry market players—governments, utilities, energy efficiency advocates and building professionals—to promote advanced design practices, innovative technologies, public policies and programs that improve energy efficiency.

To learn more about NBI, visit [newbuildings.org](https://newbuildings.org) or follow us on Twitter [@zeroenergybldgs](https://twitter.com/zeroenergybldgs)

### **ABOUT RMI**

RMI is an independent nonprofit founded in 1982 that transforms global energy systems through market-driven solutions to align with a 1.5°C future and secure a clean, prosperous, zero-carbon future for all. We work in the world's most critical geographies and engage businesses, policymakers, communities, and NGOs to identify and scale energy system interventions that will cut greenhouse gas emissions at least 50 percent by 2030. RMI has offices in Basalt and Boulder, Colorado; New York City; Oakland, California; Washington, D.C.; and Beijing.

More information on RMI can be found at [www.rmi.org](https://www.rmi.org) or follow us on Twitter [@RockyMtnInst](https://twitter.com/RockyMtnInst).