

Effective Use of the New Mexico Energy Conservation Code

The *New Mexico Energy Conservation Code* (NMECC) is a model code that regulates minimum energy conservation requirements for new buildings. The NMECC addresses energy conservation requirements for all aspects of energy uses in both commercial and residential construction, including heating and ventilating, lighting, water heating, and power usage for appliances and building systems.

The NMECC is a design document. For example, before one constructs a building, the designer must determine the minimum insulation *R*-values and fenestration *U*-factors for the building exterior envelope. Depending on whether the building is for residential use or for commercial use, the NMECC sets forth minimum requirements for exterior envelope insulation, window and door *U*-factors and SHGC ratings, duct insulation, lighting and power efficiency, and water distribution insulation.

Arrangement and Format of the 2009 NMECC

Before applying the requirements of the NMECC it is beneficial to understand its arrangement and format. The NMECC, being based on the IECC, is arranged and organized to follow sequential steps that generally occur during a plan review or inspection. The NMECC is divided into five different parts:

Chapters	Subjects
1–2	Administration and definitions
3	Climate zones and general materials requirements
4	Energy efficiency for residential buildings
5	Energy efficiency for commercial buildings
6	Referenced standards

The following is a chapter-by-chapter synopsis of the scope and intent of the provisions of the *New Mexico Energy Conservation Code*:

Chapter 1 Administration. This chapter contains provisions for the application, enforcement and administration of subsequent requirements of the code. In addition to establishing the scope of the code, Chapter 1 identifies which buildings and structures come under its purview. Chapter 1 is largely concerned with maintaining “due process of law” in enforcing the energy conservation criteria contained in the body of the code. Only through careful observation of the administrative provisions can the building official reasonably expect to demonstrate that “equal protection under the law” has been provided.

Chapter 2 Definitions. All terms that are defined in the code are listed alphabetically in Chapter 2. While a defined term may be used in one chapter or another, the meaning provided in Chapter 2 is applicable throughout the code.

Additional definitions regarding climate zones are found in Tables 301.3(1) and (2). These are not listed in Chapter 2.

Where understanding of a term’s definition is especially key to or necessary for understanding of a particular code provision, the term is shown in *italics* wherever it appears in the code. This is true only for those terms that have a meaning that is unique to the code. In other words, the generally understood meaning of a term or phrase might not be sufficient or consistent with the meaning prescribed by the code; therefore, it is essential that the code-defined meaning be known.

Guidance regarding tense, gender and plurality of defined terms as well as guidance regarding terms not defined in this code is provided.

Chapter 3 Climate Zones. Chapter 3 specifies the climate zones that will serve to establish the exterior design conditions. In addition, Chapter 3 provides interior design conditions that are used as a basis for assumptions in heating and cooling load calculations, and provides basic material requirements for insulation materials and fenestration materials.

Climate has a major impact on the energy use of most buildings. The code establishes many requirements such as wall and roof insulation *R*-values, window and door thermal transmittance requirement (*U*-factors) as well as provisions that affect the mechanical systems based upon the climate where the building is located. This chapter will contain the information that will be used to properly assign the building location into the correct climate zone and will then be used as the basis for establishing requirements or elimination of requirements.

Chapter 4 Residential Energy Efficiency. Chapter 4 contains the energy-efficiency-related requirements for the design and construction of residential buildings regulated under this code. It should be noted that the definition of a *residential building* in this code is unique for this code. In this code, a *residential building* is an R-2, R-3 or R-4 building three stories or less in height. All other R-1 buildings, including residential buildings greater than three stories in height, are regulated by the energy conservation requirements of Chapter 5. The applicable portions of a residential building must comply with the provisions within this chapter for energy effi-

ciency. This chapter defines requirements for the portions of the building and building systems that impact energy use in new residential construction and promotes the effective use of energy. The provisions within the chapter promote energy efficiency in the building envelope, the heating and cooling system and the service water heating system of the building.

Chapter 5 Commercial Energy Efficiency. Chapter 5 contains the energy-efficiency-related requirements for the design and construction of most types of commercial buildings and residential buildings greater than three stories in height above grade. Residential buildings, townhouses and garden apartments three stories or less in height are covered in Chapter 4. Like Chapter 4, this chapter defines requirements for the portions of the building and building systems that impact energy use in new commercial construction and new residential construction greater than three stories in height, and promotes the effective use of energy. The provisions within the chapter promote energy efficiency in the building envelope, the heating and cooling system and the service water heating system of the building.

Chapter 6 Referenced Standards. The code contains numerous references to standards that are used to regulate materials and methods of construction. Chapter 6 contains a comprehensive list of all standards that are referenced in the code. The standards are part of the code to the extent of the reference to the standard. Compliance with the referenced standard is necessary for compliance with this code. By providing specifically adopted standards, the construction and installation requirements necessary for compliance with the code can be readily determined. The basis for code compliance is, therefore, established and available on an equal basis to the code official, contractor, designer and owner.

Chapter 6 is organized in a manner that makes it easy to locate specific standards. It lists all of the referenced standards, alphabetically, by acronym of the promulgating agency of the standard. Each agency's standards are then listed in either alphabetical or numeric order based upon the standard identification. The list also contains the title of the standard; the edition (date) of the standard referenced; any addenda included as part of the ICC adoption; and the section or sections of this code that reference the standard.