May 2025

Climate Leader Communities GUIDANCE for Specialized Stretch Code

Specialized Stretch Code Adoption Process

INTRODUCTION

The Specialized Code is required (MGL 25A Section 6) to be designed to achieve Massachusetts greenhouse gas (GHG) emission limits and sub-limits set every five years from 2025 to 2050. As a result, all compliance pathways under the Specialized Code are designed to ensure new construction that is consistent with a net-zero Massachusetts economy in 2050, primarily through deep energy efficiency, reduced heating loads, and efficient electrification. Regardless of the on-site renewable potential, the largest emissions impact for many buildings stems from the heating loads and choice of heating fuel for the building. Buildings reliant on fossil fuel combustion equipment have no clear path to zero emissions, while electrically heated buildings do due to the steady increase in renewable and clean energy sources on the ISO-NE electric grid. Accordingly, the Specialized Code requires all new buildings to be designed with electric service and wiring sufficient for future electrification of space and water heating as well as any combustion equipment appliance loads.

Communities seeking Climate Leader certification must adopt the Specialized Code. The recommended way for cities and towns to meet this requirement is by adopting the Specialized Code (the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC) and are directed to do so in the manner prescribed by law. The code may also be rescinded by any municipality in the manner prescribed by law.

If adopted by a municipality, this energy code shall govern rather than the energy code adopted by the BBRS as the International Energy with Massachusetts Amendments (780 CMR 13.00 or 34.00) or, for low rise residential construction, 780 CMR 51.00, and appendix AJ as applicable.

PROCESS for ADOPTION

Cities are advised to adopt the Specialized Code by general ordinance via City Council.

Towns are advised to seek adoption of the Specialized Code as a general bylaw through a vote of Town Meeting.

Please note, once the Specialized Code is adopted by a municipality, all future editions, amendments, and modifications of the Specialized Code are automatically adopted unless the municipality rescinds adoption of the Specialized Code itself. A community must adopt the Specialized Code "as-is," without applying any amendments or conditions. Municipalities must adopt the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC

The following sample article, sample motion, and sample bylaw are provided as examples:

May 2025

SAMPLE TOWN WARRANT ARTICLE:

To see if the Town will vote to enact Chapter ___ of the Town of _____General Bylaws, entitled "Specialized Energy Code" for the purpose of regulating the design and construction of buildings for the effective use of energy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, pursuant to the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, including future editions, amendments or modifications thereto, with an effective date of **XX**, a copy of which is on file with the Town Clerk, or take any other action relative thereto.

SAMPLE TOWN MEETING MOTION:

I move that the Town will enact Chapter ___ of the Town of _____General Bylaws, entitled "Specialized Energy Code" for the purpose of regulating the design and construction of buildings for the effective use of energy and reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, pursuant to the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, including future editions, amendments or modifications thereto, with an effective date of **XX**.

SAMPLE BYLAW:

Chapter ____

SPECIALIZED ENERGY CODE

[Adopted 0-0-20xx ATM / STM by Art.]

§ ____-1 Definitions
§ ____-2 Purpose
§ ____-3 Applicability
§ ____-4 Stretch Code

§ ____-1 Definitions

International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) - The International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) is a building energy code created by the International Code Council. It is a model code adopted by many state and municipal governments in the United States for the establishment of minimum design and construction requirements for energy efficiency, and is updated on a three-year cycle. The baseline energy conservation requirements of the MA State Building Code are the IECC with Massachusetts amendments, as approved by the Board of Building Regulations and Standards and published in state regulations as part of 780 CMR.

Specialized Energy Code - Codified by the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, the Specialized Energy Code is an appendix to the Massachusetts Stretch Energy Code, based on further amendments to the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) to improve the energy efficiency and reduce the climate impacts of buildings built to this code.

Stretch Energy Code - Codified by the combination of 225 CMR 22 and 23[1], not including Appendices RC and CC, the Stretch Energy Code is a comprehensive set of amendments to the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC)

seeking to achieve all lifecycle cost-effective energy efficiency in accordance with the Green Communities Act of 2008, as well as to reduce the climate impacts of buildings built to this code.

§ ____-2 Purpose

The purpose of the Specialized energy code (225 CMR 22 and 23 including appendices RC and CC) is to provide a more energy efficient and low greenhouse gas emissions alternative to the Stretch energy code (225 CMR 22 and 23 without appendices RC and CC) or the Baseline energy code (found solely within 780 CMR), for new construction.

§ ____-3 Applicability

This energy code applies to residential and commercial buildings.

§ ____-4 Specialized Code

The Specialized Code, as codified by the entirety of 225 CMR 22 and 23 including Appendices RC and CC, including any future editions, amendments, or modifications, is herein incorporated by reference into the Town of _____ General Bylaws, Chapter ____.

The Stretch Code is enforceable by the inspector of buildings or building commissioner.