

We all believe that New Mexicans should be able to live and work in structurally sound buildings that enclose healthy and comfortable indoor environments. Stories of, especially older and vulnerable, residents suffering through last summer's heat waves because of poor insulation, lack of electrical capacity for air conditioners or simply not being able to afford their energy bill should deeply trouble every one of us.

The fact is that many New Mexico households carry large energy burdens, often due to living in leaky homes. Over half of New Mexico's housing stock needs extensive weatherization and expensive electrical panel upgrades before residents can install heat pumps and other highly efficient electric appliances that will reduce their energy bills even more.

While the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) offers unprecedented opportunities to electrify, many residents will be concentrating their IRA funds on what forward-looking building codes could have achieved when their homes were originally built. It is far less expensive to install a heat pump or a conduit for a future solar array or EV charging system when a building is being constructed than it is to tear up walls and concrete to do retrofits later.

So how do we design building codes today with the foresight to protect New Mexicans who will be living in homes that will likely last for decades, if not into the next century? What conditions must we plan for? How can we make it easier for New Mexicans to integrate new energy-efficient technologies into their homes as they evolve and become more affordable?

In the next 50 years, New Mexico average temperatures will rise by 5° to 7° F, according to the 2022 [*Climate Change in New Mexico Over the Next 50 Years: Impacts on Water Resource*](#) report. Already last summer many evaporative coolers reached their limit for safely keeping people cool over long heat waves, so it is likely that demand for heat pumps or air conditioners will increase along with electricity usage. Water will become scarcer. Fires will worsen in frequency and severity, as well subsequent flooding in some areas. Insurance rates will continue to climb.

At the same time renewables and battery prices will continue to fall, as will the cost of heat pumps, heat pump water heaters and induction cooktops. Electric vehicles will become far more commonplace, and adopting codes that make charging accessible to all will allow low-income residents to enjoy fueling their EVs for the equivalent of less than \$1/gallon at home. Incentives to defray the cost of installing chargers in residential, multi-family, and commercial

buildings are widely available now from electricity providers and government sources.

Given these changes, adopting the 2021 International Energy Conservation Codes with the added EV requirements is an essential step. The codes + EV charging will help current and future residents adapt to the consequences of warming, save money on energy bills, live in cleaner indoor air and reduce climate emissions in line with the state's climate goals.

Stefi Weisburd
Tijeras, NM
(505) 363-0090