

# ICC Finalizes 2021 I-Code Updates

November 02, 2020

Before the end of the year, the International Code Council (ICC) will publish the 2021 edition of its International Codes ([I-Codes](#)), including updates to the International Building Code, the International Residential Code (IRC), and the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), as well as updates to the fire and plumbing codes. Altogether, the ICC's 2021 update includes revisions to 14 different code standards with an underlying focus on energy efficiency, conservation of resources, and the overall impact of energy usage on the environment. Unsurprisingly, several updates did not go far enough for energy and environment advocates, while homebuilders remain concerned that certain revisions are too restrictive and will affect affordability.

The ICC originally [planned to release its 2021 I-Codes in October](#); however, the appeals process took longer than anticipated. The outstanding items were [three appeals](#) filed by a coalition of associations that represent homebuilders and their interests, including the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), the Leading Builders of America, and the American Gas Association. The specific changes appealed were RE147-19 and CE217-19, Parts I and II. (Separately, the NAHB argued for the rejection of 20 other changes because the adoption process violated the ICC's voter eligibility and validation procedures, but this appeal was denied in early October.) These code changes would require the installation of several additional 40A, 220V receptacles in all new homes to accommodate electric readiness for future electric retrofit of gas appliances and electric vehicle supply equipment (i.e., vehicle charging stations). The coalition argued [the proposals went beyond the scope and intent of the code](#), adding thousands of dollars to the price of a new home for electrical equipment homeowners may never use.

On September 25, 2020, the Appeals Board [published its recommendation](#), determining that the proposed changes are outside the current scope and intent of the energy provisions of the IRC and IECC. On October 8, 2020, the Code Council Board sustained the appeals. RE147-19 and CE217-19 will not appear in the 2021 I-Codes.

Understanding how the I-Codes affect state and local code requirements is critical for anticipating legal challenges. The ICC and its committees update the I-Codes on three-year cycles, with adoption by state and local jurisdictions usually trailing a few cycles behind. While the I-Codes are only models and not legally binding, eventually most U.S. jurisdictions at the state and local levels will either adopt the codes as written or with amendments. As a result, the I-Codes are a reliable tool not only for anticipating home building and manufacturing requirements but also for gauging future regulatory enforcement activity.

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