
Local Government & Housing Committee

HB 1187

Brief Description: Requiring the installation of solar hot water heater systems in single-family dwellings.

Sponsors: Representatives Chase and Hunt.

<p style="text-align: center;">Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requiring the installation of solar hot water heater systems in single-family dwellings.
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Hearing Date: 1/22/09

Staff: Sara del Moral (786-7291)

Background:

State Building Code.

The State Building Code Council (SBCC) was created by statute in 1974 to provide analysis and advice to the Legislature and the Office of the Governor on state building code issues. The SBCC establishes the minimum building, mechanical, fire, plumbing, and energy code requirements in Washington by reviewing, developing, and adopting the State Building Code. The State Building Code Act (Act) sets forth requirements through the provision of building codes to promote the health, safety, and welfare of the occupants or users of buildings and structures throughout the state.

The Act consists of regulations adopted by reference from the International Building Code, the International Residential Code, the International Mechanical Code, the National Fuel Gas Code, the International Fire Code, and the Uniform Plumbing Code and Uniform Plumbing Code Standards. In maintaining the Act, the SBCC must regularly review updated versions of the codes and other pertinent information and amend the Act as it deems appropriate. The SBCC

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may also issue opinions relating to the codes at the request of a local official charged with the duty to enforce the Act.

Water Heater Systems.

Solar water heater systems may be used to heat water for a wide variety of uses, including home, business and industrial uses. They are generally composed of solar thermal collectors and a fluid system to move the heat from the collector to its point of usage.

Demand heaters provide hot water only as needed. Because they do not continuously maintain a supply of hot water, they use less energy than conventional water heaters.

In Washington, water heating is the second largest contributor to home energy use. Both types of water heater reduce such home energy use by 40 – 50 percent, cutting both energy costs and carbon emissions from water heating.

In many cases the total monthly cost of solar heat can be less than that for conventional water heaters. Payback periods usually range from 15 to 20 years. Factors influencing whether a household saves money in the long term include energy prices, hot water consumption, climate, and the presence of federal and state incentives.

Solar Water Heater Regulations.

State law requires the Department of General Administration to perform life-cycle analyses on construction or renovation projects of public agencies. Such analyses may include consideration of the possibility of a solar water heating system.

Until July 2009, the state sales and use tax will not be applied to sales or repair of solar water heating systems.

Summary of Bill:

The following requirements are added to the State Building Code Act.

Solar Water Heater Requirement.

Beginning January 2012, local governments may not issue building permits for single-family dwellings that do not have solar water heating systems.

Variances.

Building code enforcement authorities may approve a variance only if:

- installation is impracticable due to poor solar resources;
- installation is cost-prohibitive, based on a life-cycle analysis over fifteen years;
- a substitute renewable energy system is installed (e.g. a system using wind, heat or sunlight); or
- a demand water heater and one other gas appliance are installed.

Responsibilities of the State Building Code Council.

By December 2009, the SBCC, in consultation with the Energy Policy Division of the Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development (DCTED), shall adopt standards for solar water heater systems and establish an application for a variance to be used by local government building code enforcement authorities.

Annual Reporting Requirements.

Beginning January 15, 2013, local building code enforcement authorities must annually report the following to the SBCC:

- the number of solar water heater systems installed; and
- the number of variances issued and the reasons why they were issued.

Beginning January 31, 2013, the SBCC must annually report the following to the Energy Policy Division of the DCTED and the Legislature:

- the number of solar water heater systems installed statewide and by city and county building code enforcement jurisdictions for the previous calendar year;
- the number of variances issued statewide and by city and county building code enforcement jurisdictions for the previous calendar year; and
- an analysis of the reasons variances were approved by city and county building code enforcement authorities.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Fiscal note requested on January 19, 2009.

Effective Date: The bill takes effect 90 days after adjournment of the session in which the bill is passed.