

Massachusetts Stretch Building Code

- Frequently Asked Questions –

Chilmark Energy Committee

What is the Stretch Building Code?

The Stretch Code is an enhancement to the existing state building code focused on improving energy efficiency and lowering energy costs for the homeowner.

Why was the Stretch Code established? Has it been widely adopted?

The code is a material part of the Commonwealth's commitment to foster a clean, affordable, and resilient energy future. As of November 2018, 250 towns have adopted the Stretch Code, with 30 more expected by the end of 2019.

How does the Stretch Code differ from the base code?

Meeting the Stretch Code requires greater energy efficiency for newly constructed houses*. This is measured using the Home Energy Rating System and does not mandate any particular building approach. HERS ratings are measured by certified professionals. It is important to note that currently, the Stretch Code gives results very close to the base code adopted in 2017 – it's no longer much of a "Stretch".

Does the Stretch Code apply to renovations or additions?

NO. The Stretch Code applies only to newly constructed dwellings.

Does the Stretch Code result in higher costs?

Construction costs will be higher for Stretch Code compliant homes than under the base code – but only by a small amount (typically less than 1%). The net price increase to the buyer, after energy efficiency incentives, will be even less. This includes the cost of the HERS rating. As an example, a new house of 2550 square ft. with a propane-fired heating system will have about a 0.2% higher price under the Stretch Code than under the base code. The savings in energy costs will be about \$475 per year, meaning that the payback time will be less than 3 years**. Thereafter, the savings for the homeowner will be appreciable.

* The Stretch Code also applies to large commercial buildings of (40,000 square ft +) – likely not an issue in Chilmark

** See, for example, <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/11/16/small-propane-heated-home-2017.pdf>