



Heat Pump Water Heater Permitting

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SUSTAINABLE BUILDING WEEK



New Buildings Institute • Harka Architecture •
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Heat Pump Water Heater Permitting



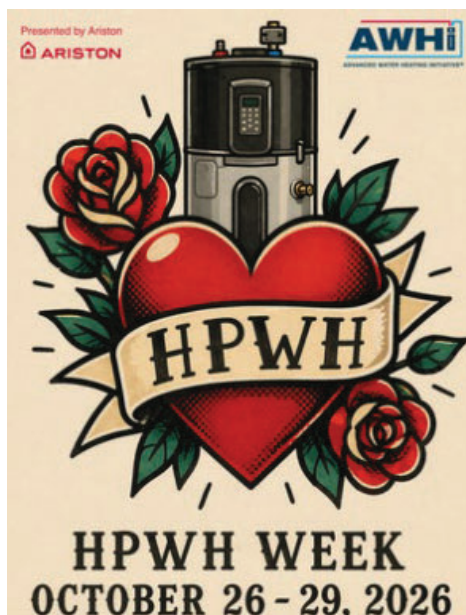
SBW 2023



This webinar was developed in partnership with the LEARN Program.

The LEARN Program is a San Diego-based workforce education and training program that has partnered with New Buildings Institute to offer free energy efficiency and electrification webinars. Please visit the LEARN website for more information: www.sandiegolearn.com

HPWH Week – 3 Weeks Away!



- [Register here](#)
- Over 250 people have ordered tattoos– [get yours today](#)

Win a Free Heat Pump Water Heater!



AIR&WATER
SOLUTIONS



Post why you love HPWHs
Tag **#HPWHweek**
We'll enter you in contest!



Live split HPWH training

- Live split system training in San Jose on Tuesday, October 27
- Livestream available
- Three manufacturers
 - A.O. Smith
 - Ecological
 - SanCO2

[Register here](#)



HPWH Permitting + Inspections



Today's Panelists



Madison Vander Klay
Building
Decarbonization
Coalition



Siyi Zhang
Solar App



Steve Brotton
Great Northwest
Installations



Heat Pump Water Heater Permitting

October 7, 2026

About the BDC

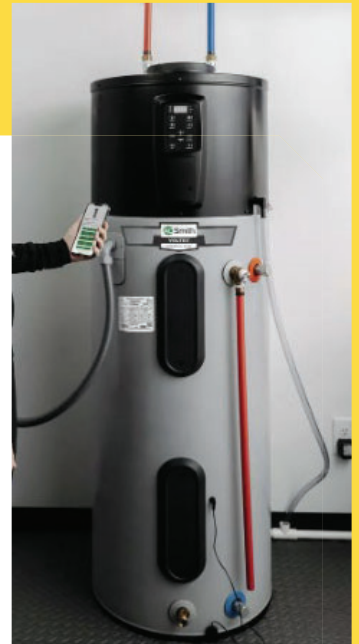
The Building Decarbonization Coalition (BDC) aligns critical stakeholders on a path to transform the nation's buildings through clean energy, using policy, research, market development and public engagement.

The BDC and its members are charting the course to eliminate fossil fuels in buildings to improve people's health, cut climate and air pollution, prioritize high-road jobs, and ensure that our communities are more resilient to the impacts of climate change.



Why does permitting matter?

- Permitting ensures work is completed correctly
- Incentive programs require permits for eligibility. Obstacles can jeopardize reimbursement
- Most appliance installations are done on an emergency basis - timeliness matters
- 600+ jurisdictions in California - each do permitting differently
- Estimates vary, but anywhere from 75-93% of work may be done without permits

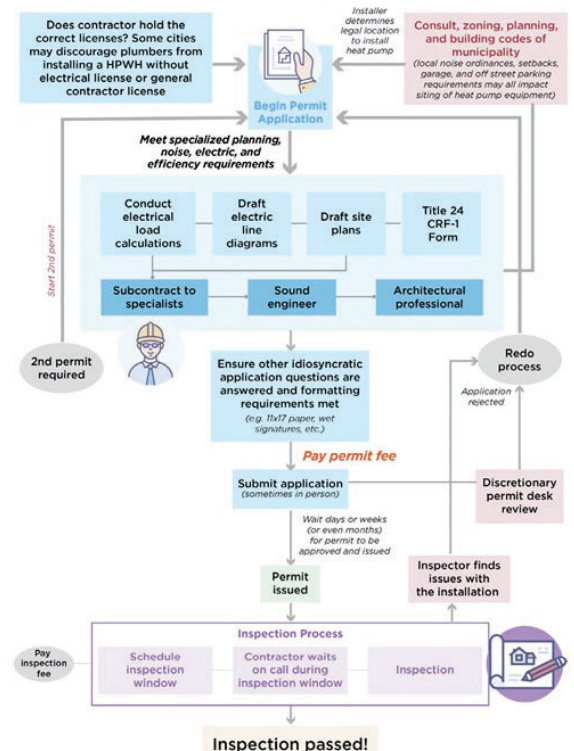


Contractors and installers point to a number of challenges securing permits for heat pump water heaters

- Multiple permits required for one appliance (electric, plumbing, etc)
- Unclear requirements for application, fees, and inspections
- Local setback and noise requirements
- TECH Clean Permitting Pilot found statewide average timeline of 5.9 days to permit issuance; longer in the Bay Area

TABLE 1
The Permitting Gauntlet

The Permitting Gauntlet



Fees vary significantly

- Study in San Mateo county found fees varied from \$16 to \$500
- Similar study in MCE service territory found variance between \$30 and \$517. Minimum costs were higher in jurisdictions that required multiple permits
- Fees often incorporate multiple costs
- Some jurisdictions add scaling percentage-based or “building permit valuation” fees based on total cost of the project

Permit Fee	\$234.00
Plan Check Fee	\$152.10
Fire Plan Check Fee	\$16.38
Title 24 Disabled Access Fee	\$28.08
Title 24 Energy Compliance Fee	\$28.08
Community Planning Fee	\$14.04
Sustainable Development Fee	\$14.04
Technology Enhancement Fee	\$15.21
Building Standards Fee	\$1.00
Strong Motion Instrumentation Fee	\$0.85
Filing Fee	\$62.50
Continuing Education Fee	\$1.17
Total Fees	\$567.45



Above example does *not* include plumbing, electrical, or mechanical permit fees

Variance impacts cost

22% of the cost of California HPWH installations exists only on permitted projects

Averages from All-Electric California installed machines empirical data

Green bracket = costs typically not incurred for unpermitted work



Cost averages based on project records aggregated across HPWH installation projects in the San Francisco Bay Area. All-Electric California : CSLB Lic. #1078011
Permit fees are highly variable across jurisdictions.



Courtesy of Eric Morrill

Contractor Testimonials Show Why

Interior WH failed; contractor proposed moving to side yard. 6 foot setback forced relocation to other side of house. Added ~\$10,000 to reroute plumbing

Multifamily project retroactively put through design review; landscaping requirements attached to project adding ~ \$100,000+ in cost

30+ day timeline to issue permit based on back and forth with a city over setback reqs. Customer pushing to find alternative contractor who will install without a permit

SB 222 (Wiener): The Heat Pump Access Act

Applies to residential retrofit projects, where an appliance is sized to serve one dwelling unit

- **Consolidated permits:** One application for one appliance. Exemptions for panel upgrades
- **Automated permit issuance:** For same location swapouts, no panel upgrades. Further carveouts on HVAC side
- **Flat and transparent fee structure:** Soft fee cap of \$150 for HPWH; cities can adopt findings to exceed, but the fee must be flat by appliance type and clearly posted.



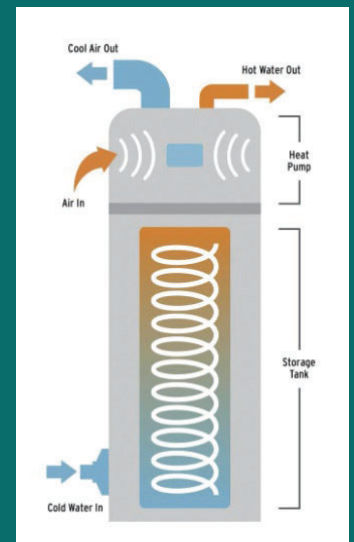
SB 222 (Wiener): The Heat Pump Access Act, Cont.

- **Prohibits HOAs from banning heat pumps**
- **Asynchronous inspections:** in which an installer and inspector do not need to be simultaneously on site. CBOs can require a subsequent in-person inspection
 - AB 1738 (Carillo) also passed: will require AHJs to offer virtual inspections for water heaters in addition to other home projects
- **Limits local standards** that do not support health and safety
 - Prohibits setbacks greater than 3 feet
 - Allows noise ordinances that give inverter equipment 15 decibels additional clearance compared to other non-inverter equipment
- Cities can adopt specific findings on health and safety to add additional requirements



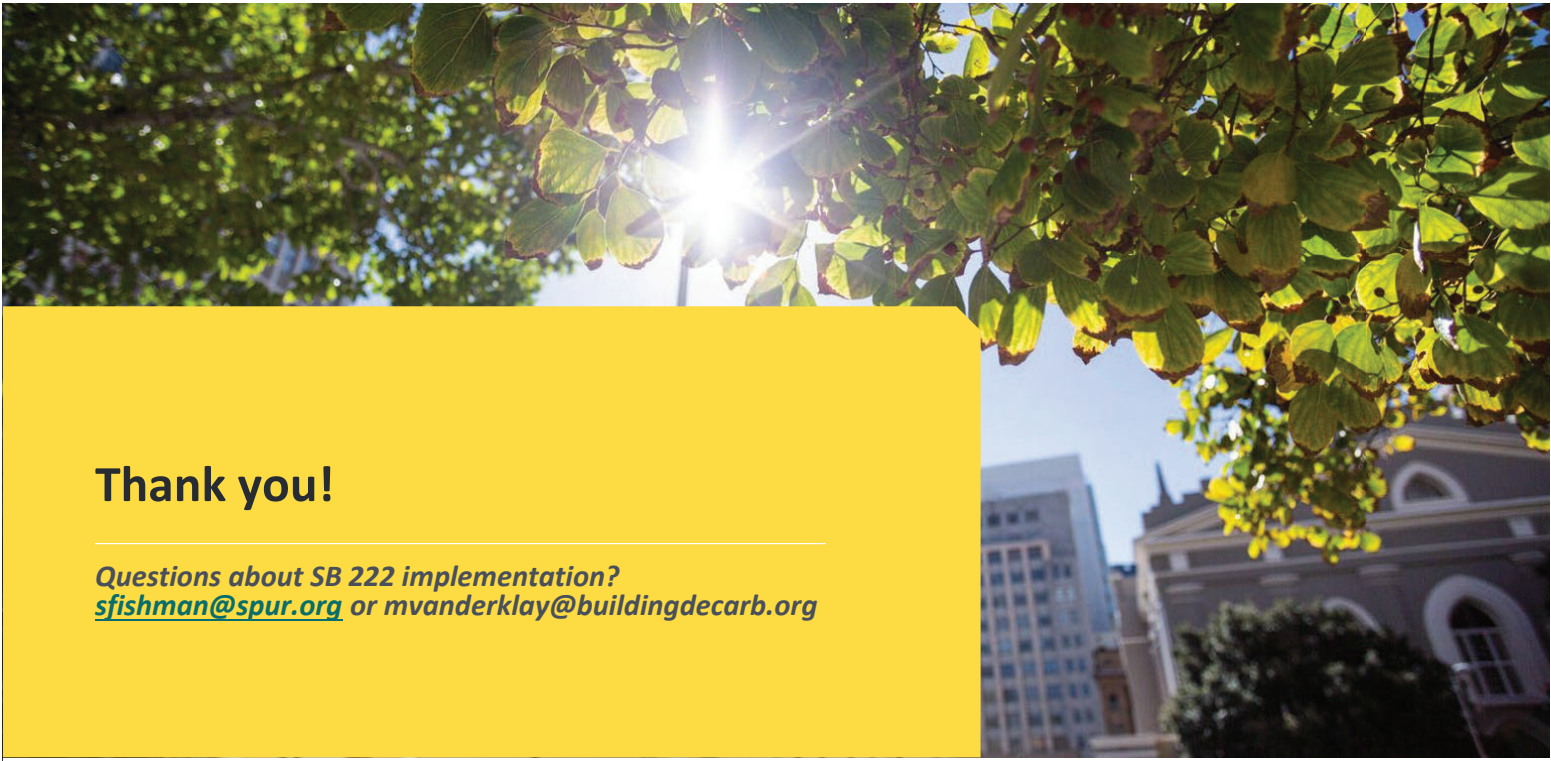
Phased-in Requirements

- January 1st, 2027:
 - Restrictions on HOA and local rules
 - Transparency requirements
 - Soft fee caps
- July 1st, 2027
 - Asynchronous inspections
- January 1st, 2028
 - Consolidate permits into one application
- July 1st, 2028
 - Automated/ instant permitting



More Work to be Done

- Implementation efforts will be key to successful deployment across the state
- The bill does not require standardization of permitting software. Coordination can support regional adoption of software to minimize discrepancies from city to city
- Challenges exist in multifamily projects when swapping out many appliances at once or appliances sized to serve multiple dwelling units
- Education, training, and resources key to bill's long-term success



Thank you!

Questions about SB 222 implementation?
sfishman@spur.org or mvanderklay@buildingdecarb.org

Virtual HPWH Inspections

Siyi Zhang - Solar App

Minor Label and Split HPWH Permitting

Minor Label Plumbing Permitting Examples

- Simple, label-based system
- Labels are sold in books of 10 for \$140
- Used for small scale plumbing AND electrical work
- 1 out of 10 permits is inspected (randomly)
- Asynchronous inspections (similar to Solar App in California)



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Plumbers must

- Be in good standing (three failures in a row means they are no longer allowed to use the minor label program)
- Register the installation within 48 hours
- **NOTE** – Electricians can use the minor label too to extend a 240-volt line for gas replacements

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After Installation

- Plumber doesn't have to wait for an inspection
- Tells homeowner they could be contacted in "a month to two years"
- If inspection fails – the plumber must pay for full permit and reinspection

Virtual Inspections in WA

- WA – allows live, virtual WH inspections
 - Installer calls the inspector's office 30 mins before completion
 - Installer shows the inspector the installation over video
 - If there are any small fixes required, installer can make them immediately and not come back or have to pay for reinspection
 - These are similar to potential virtual California inspections



Split HPWHs presenting challenges

- Have to sometimes get three permits
 - Mechanical
 - Plumbing
 - Electrical



Questions?

Thank you for your interest and
joining us today!

Other LEARN courses of interest:

HPWH: Why Split Systems Matter

Explore when/where split systems make a huge difference.



New Electric Solutions We're Excited About

Freshly released all-electric options. Innovations to keep an eye on.



Marketing and Lead Generation for Electrification

Finding the right audience for your products and services.

