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**California Building Energy  
Benchmarking Program  
Frequently Asked Questions  
(Multi-Family)  
April 18, 2019**

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# Building Energy Benchmarking Program

## 1. What is the Building Energy Benchmarking Program?

The Building Energy Benchmarking Program is California's new program requiring building owners to track and report their energy usage with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, a free online tool.

## 2. When does the law take effect?

Mandatory reporting began in 2018 for buildings with no residential utility accounts and more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area. For buildings with 17 or more residential utility accounts and more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area, reporting is due by June 1 annually, beginning in 2019.

## 3. What if my city or county already has a benchmarking and public disclosure requirement?

The state regulations allow for buildings reported under a local benchmarking program to be exempted from reporting to the state. Any programs that have received such an exemption will be listed on the Energy Commission's benchmarking page [www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking](http://www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking). For buildings located in jurisdictions with programs listed on this page, benchmarking and reporting to the local jurisdiction will fulfill compliance with the state program.

Note that although your building might be exempted from local ordinances, you may still be required to report to the state.

## 4. Is there a procedure to protect proprietary data?

Yes. When (1) the building owner is the customer of record for the only utility account serving a building, or (2) the building owner is one of two customers of record if the other customer has granted permission to have their energy use data shared, the owner may request a trade secret exemption from the executive director of the Energy Commission. If this exemption is granted, the building owner will be required to report building characteristic information but not energy use data.

## 5. Where can I get more information regarding this program?

The Energy Commission's benchmarking page, [www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking](http://www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking), includes overview information and training materials regarding the program.



# Compliance

## 1. Am I required to comply?

You are required to comply if your building has (1) more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area and (2) 17 or more residential utility accounts. These are referred to as “disclosable” buildings. For a building with more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area and no residential utility accounts, please refer to the Commercial FAQ.

## 2. What if the units in my building are not individually metered?

Each residential unit is considered a ‘utility account’ for compliance purposes, whether the unit is directly metered or on a master meter. Therefore, any master metered building that has more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area and has 17 or more residential units is required to comply.

## 3. What if my property has multiple buildings?

The regulations require reporting at the building level when possible. However, multifamily properties that meet all of the following criteria should be reported as a single building:

- a) Two or more buildings on the same parcel or adjacent parcels.
- b) At least one energy meter shared between buildings.
- c) Total gross floor area of more than 50,000 square feet in the buildings that share a meter.
- d) 17 or more residential utility accounts.\*

If you wish to track energy use on a more granular level at your multifamily property, you may create a parent property in Portfolio Manager and include individual buildings under it using the “campus” feature. However, benchmarking results should be reported at the property level to ensure that results capture the energy use of all shared meters and central systems.

*\*Note that for multifamily properties, each residential unit is considered a ‘utility account’ for compliance purposes, whether the unit is directly metered or master metered.*

## 4. What does gross floor area include?

The gross floor area includes all square footage within the exterior walls of the building.

## 5. Are there any exemptions to the reporting requirement?

Reporting is not required for your building if any of the following apply:

- Your building is a condominium, as described in section 4125 or 6542 of the California Civil Code.
- Your building has between 1 and 16 residential utility accounts. (Though benchmarking is required for buildings that have no residential utility accounts and more than 50,000 square feet of gross floor area, this document focuses on residential buildings.)
- Your building did not have a certificate of occupancy or temporary certificate of occupancy for more than half of the calendar year for which reporting to the Energy Commission is required.
- Your building is scheduled to be demolished one year or less from the reporting date.
- Your building has over half of the total area used for scientific experiments, manufacturing, or industrial purposes.
- Your building was benchmarked pursuant to a local program listed on the Energy Commission's benchmarking page, [www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking](http://www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking).

## **6. Can I use ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager to benchmark my building if my building is less than 50,000 square feet?**

Yes.

## **7. How do I comply?**

There are five general steps required to comply:

- 1) Open an account in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager.
- 2) Enter each disclosable building into your account.
- 3) Enter energy use data for each disclosable building.
- 4) Click the appropriate reporting link on the Energy Commission's benchmarking page, [www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking](http://www.energy.ca.gov/benchmarking), which will direct you to log into Portfolio Manager.
- 5) Submit your report from within Portfolio Manager.

## **8. By when do I need to complete this?**

Reporting is due by June 1 annually, beginning in 2019.

## **9. Will I need to complete this entire process each year?**

After the first year you report, much of the information you are reporting will remain the same, so you will just need to check for information that may have changed, enter the energy use data for the previous calendar year, and submit your report.



**10. What if I have a different energy management software? Do I need to load information into ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager as well?**

Yes.

**11. What resources are available to help me comply?**

The Energy Commission's benchmarking page includes step-by-step guides, videos, and frequently asked questions. You can also contact the Energy Commission's Benchmarking Hotline at [Benchmarking@energy.ca.gov](mailto:Benchmarking@energy.ca.gov) or (855) 279-6460. For questions and training regarding ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, [the Portfolio Manager website](#) also lists answers to frequently asked questions.

**12. What if the building owner or tenant does not comply?**

The Energy Commission has the authority to issue fines for noncompliance, after allowing a period of 30 days to correct a violation. Building owners who have missed the June 1 reporting deadline are encouraged to report as soon as possible.

# Portfolio Manager and Data Collection

## 1. What does ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager allow you to do?

Portfolio Manager can track and assess the energy and water consumption of your buildings, generate weather-normalized energy use intensity and greenhouse gas emissions metrics, generate a 1 to 100 ENERGY STAR score for many building types, and compare your building to other buildings in your portfolio and to similar buildings nationwide.

## 2. What sources of energy do I need to report?

Electricity, natural gas, steam, and fuel oil consumption are required. However, Portfolio Manager also includes fields for propane and other forms of energy that you can input and track.

## 3. What fields are required in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager for compliance?

Basic property details such as address, total gross floor area, occupancy, and year built are required in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, along with 12 months of energy data. The most important fields to have accurate are the gross floor area and energy data. If you do not have accurate values for other fields, you can use default or approximate values until you can get more accurate values.

To streamline the process of collecting data, you can visit [ENERGY STAR's](#) website to download a data collection worksheet of all the information you'll need to fill out for your specific property type.

## 4. Is an ENERGY STAR score required for reporting?

No. Not all building types are eligible for an ENERGY STAR score.

## 5. Do I need a building identification number from the Energy Commission to report my building?

No. If your utility requests this when you are requesting data, type in N/A, all zeroes, or just leave it blank.

**6. How do I handle a property of individual buildings that are smaller than 50,000 square feet?**

Reporting is not required for buildings with 50,000 square feet or less of gross floor area, except when a meter serves multiple buildings with a total gross floor area greater than 50,000 square feet, in which case the property should be reported as a single building.

**7. How do I benchmark if my building was only occupied recently and doesn't have 12 months of data?**

Your building is exempt from reporting if it did not have a permanent or temporary certificate of occupancy for more than half of the calendar year being reported. Otherwise, reporting is required, and you should include as much energy use data as you have.

**8. What do I need to provide to get whole-building data from the utility?**

You will need to provide an attestation that you are the building owner or are authorized to act on behalf of the building owner. Proof of ownership is not required.

**9. Is there a template form for requesting data as a building owner or owner's agent?**

No. Utilities have their own processes for requesting energy use data.

**10. What if I can't get tenant authorization or the utility customers refuse to release their energy use data to building owners?**

The Building Energy Benchmarking Program requires that energy utilities in California provide building-level energy use data to a building owner, owner's agent, or operator upon request for buildings with no residential utility accounts and for buildings with five or more utility accounts when at least one account is residential. These are referred to as "covered" buildings.

**11. What happens if I've requested data from the utility, but they have not yet completed my request in time for the deadline?**

Please complete your submission as soon as you have received energy use data from the utility, even if the compliance deadline has passed.

## **12. How do I check or validate the data on ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager?**

Portfolio Manager includes a [Data Quality Checker](#). The regulations require that you run the Data Quality Checker before submitting your building to the Energy Commission. Portfolio Manager will also flag certain types of errors automatically. Lastly, please review your report before submitting it to the Energy Commission.

## **13. Does the Energy Commission have any recommendations to make the ongoing data tracking process easier for owners and landlords?**

Your utility may offer direct automatic upload of energy use data to your Portfolio Manager account, which will avoid you having to request energy use data annually.

# Public Disclosure

## 1. What will the Energy Commission do with the information that is reported through this program?

The first year of data for each group of disclosable buildings (2018 for buildings with no residential accounts, and 2019 for buildings with 17 or more residential utility accounts) will not be publicly disclosed. Beginning in the second year for each group, the Energy Commission will disclose selected information for reported buildings on a public website. This will allow current and prospective building owners and tenants to gain a better understanding of the buildings in which they live and work.

## 2. Why are you publicly disclosing building energy use?

This information will help current and prospective building owners and occupants make better-informed decisions regarding purchasing, leasing, maintenance, and upgrades.

## 3. What building information will be made public?

The Energy Commission may publish the following metrics, or derivatives of them:

- Building address, including county, latitude, and longitude
- Year built
- Gross floor area and property floor area (buildings and parking)
- Property or building name, if any
- Open “comments” field for the building owner or owner’s agent to provide additional information about the building
- ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager property ID
- Percentage of space occupied (occupancy) and number of occupants
- Number of buildings (if served by one common energy meter without sub-metering)
- ENERGY STAR score for eligible buildings
- Monthly and/or annual site and/or source energy used by energy type
- Monthly and/or annual weather-normalized site and/or source energy use intensity
- Monthly and/or annual peak electricity demand
- Total greenhouse gas emissions