

**PennFuture * Clean Air Council * Green Building Alliance
Delaware Valley Green Building Council * Sustainable Business Network
Sierra Club * Natural Resources Defense Council**

Consequences of Outdated Building Codes

Building codes ensure that our houses, office buildings, and commercial structures are safe, healthy, and energy efficient. Yet, Pennsylvania has failed to update its building codes since 2009 creating significant challenges.

Energy Efficiency

Per the U.S. Department of Energy, overall energy savings under the 2015 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) is up to 30 percent better than the 2009 IECC that is currently enforced in Pennsylvania. Buildings that are constructed to 2009 IECC represent a critical lost opportunity for increased energy efficiency. In addition, these structures have the potential to be in use for decades, locking in higher costs and increased carbon emissions from building energy use. This is of particular concern as both Philadelphia and Pittsburgh are in the midst of a commercial and residential construction boom, where new construction and major retrofits are held to out-of-date energy code standards.

Insurance

The Insurance Services Office Inc. (ISO) rates municipalities using the Building Code Effectiveness Grading Schedule (BCEGS), which assesses the effects of building codes in a community and how a community enforces codes with an emphasis on natural hazard mitigation. The higher the score the higher the insurance rate. For example, ISO gave Philadelphia a Class 6 rating instead of a Class 2 due, in part, to its out-of-date building codes and higher risk of damage due to natural hazards. Municipalities have an incentive to improve code adoption and enforcement in order to improve their BCEGS, as it is an objective measure that helps to calculate property insurance rates.

Code Official Training

As Pennsylvania falls further behind on code adoption, there are fewer educational materials and less support available to train inspectors to an outdated code. Currently, code administration and enforcement officials in need of certification must take the 2012 ICC test, as the Code Council Certification and Testing Department no longer offers the more than six-year-old 2009 ICC test. This means that officials must test to a different code than the one they are enforcing as a department, causing confusion and a duplication of effort.

Climate Change

According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, buildings consume up to 40% of the total energy produced in rural and suburban areas and 70% in urban areas, making each a major source of global climate change. Constructing buildings that are more energy efficient allows Pennsylvania to greatly reduce the amount of energy produced and lower its greenhouse gas emissions. In fact, the Pennsylvania Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) 2015 Climate Change Action Plan Update details how increasing energy efficiency will play a key role in reducing Pennsylvania's greenhouse gas emissions by target year 2030. Yet, this can only be accomplished by adopting updated building energy codes and the passage of House Bill 568 will make this increasingly difficult to do.