

DOB Proposes Six Interim Changes to the 2003 Chicago Mechanical Code to Spur Sustainable Construction and Economic Recovery

The Department of Buildings (DOB) is committed to convening a robust stakeholder advisory group to develop a comprehensive update to the Chicago Mechanical Code, based on the 2021 *International Mechanical Code*, as part of Phase 3 of the *Modernizing Chicago's Construction Codes* initiative in 2022. Because this effort has been delayed by COVID-19, DOB is recommending six interim amendments to the 2003 Chicago Mechanical Code to better coordinate with the 2019 Chicago Building Code and Energy Conservation Code and facilitate sustainable economic recovery.

1. Standardize method of accepting listed and labeled heating, cooling, and ventilation appliances, which have been rigorously tested to meet or exceed safety standards.

Listed and labeled heating, cooling, and ventilation appliances, which have been manufactured and tested to standards listed in the Chicago Mechanical Code, will no longer be subject to requests for in-field modifications that might void product warranties or result in unsafe conditions.

2. Adopt national standards for the use of energy-efficient condensing domestic clothes dryers.

Requirements for through-wall venting sometimes make it cost prohibitive to provide in-unit laundry in both new and existing residential buildings, especially affordable housing. By adopting consistent standards for the safe installation of condensing clothes dryers, which do not require an exterior vent, this ordinance will facilitate providing this popular residential amenity.

3. Update requirements for exhaust for domestic cooking appliances.

Currently, the Chicago Mechanical Code requires all domestic cooking appliances to be exhausted to the outdoors, although variances to this requirement are often granted. Consistent with national model codes and current practice, provisions will be added to allow listed and labeled recirculating hoods for domestic cooking appliances within dwelling units.

4. Adopt standards for exhaust fans, pollution control units (PCUs), and ventless appliances for commercial kitchens.

Standards will be added to the Chicago Mechanical Code to provide uniform acceptance criteria for exhaust fans, pollution control units (PCUs), and ventless appliances for use in commercial kitchens. This will reduce the need for specialized approvals for restaurant exhaust systems.

5. Recognize energy recovery ventilation (ERV) systems.

Energy recovery ventilation (ERV) systems allow energy contained in air that is being exhausted from a room or space to be captured and reused to precondition incoming ventilation air, which reduces energy required for heating and cooling. The Chicago Mechanical Code will be updated to clearly recognize and allow this important energy-saving technology.

6. Update list of recognized refrigerants.

All refrigerants recognized by the 2021 *International Mechanical Code* will be added to the Chicago Mechanical Code and outdated references to refrigerants banned by federal law will be removed.

The ordinance also streamlines licensing provisions related to mason contractors and stationary engineers to better coordinate with related code provisions, increase consistency across trade license types, and prepare for future upgrades to the trade licensing records system.