

Frequently Asked Questions – 2017 Update to the Chicago Energy Benchmarking Ordinance

The **Chicago Energy Benchmarking ordinance** raises awareness of energy performance through information and transparency, with the goal of unlocking energy and cost savings opportunities for businesses and residents. Building owners or managers of properties 50,000 square feet or greater are required to measure and report whole-building energy use once a year, and have the data verified once every three years. All work can be done in-house and there is not a requirement to hire a third party. For more information, see: www.CityofChicago.org/EnergyBenchmarking

What are the proposed updates to the Chicago energy benchmarking ordinance?

Most of the buildings that benchmark and report today receive a 1-100 ENERGY STAR score. Those that do not receive a score for technical reasons typically receive a metric of energy use per square foot, also known as energy use intensity (EUI).

The proposed updates to the ordinance will allow the city of Chicago to assign an energy performance rating, in the form of zero to four stars, to each building required to benchmark and report under the existing ordinance. Buildings will receive zero stars out of four stars if they have not reported and are out of compliance with the benchmarking ordinance. Otherwise, buildings will receive from one to four stars based on their ENERGY STAR score (or EUI, if a score is not available). Buildings with one to three stars that have improved their score in recent years will be eligible to earn one additional star.

Building owners or managers will be required to post the rating on their building, and to provide the rating when the building is listed for sale or lease. The City will also be authorized to publicly share the ratings on the Chicago Data Portal or other City communications.

What will it cost?

Nothing. There is no additional cost to building owners or managers. There is also no requirement to report any new information. The rating system is based on information that is already required to be reported.

Does the ordinance require mandatory improvements, audits, or retrofits for poor performers?

No. This ordinance continues to be based on providing information and making it more transparent. It is designed to help building managers and owners, as well as prospective buyers or tenants, better understand energy performance and utility costs and drive decisions regarding improving energy efficiency.

Why did the City propose changes to this ordinance?

The original Chicago Energy Benchmarking ordinance allows the City to share the ENERGY STAR scores and other metrics publicly. However, the information may not always be simple to understand and is not highly visible at each building site. The goal of updating the ordinance is to improve the transparency of the information and make it easier to understand.

What about older buildings and smaller buildings?

The past four years of data from over 2,700 reporting buildings shows that older buildings and smaller buildings perform just as well or better than newer buildings and larger buildings. In other words, older and smaller buildings are not penalized under this ordinance.