



ENERGY STAR Certified Homes, Version 3 / 3.1 Northwest Transition to National Program Frequently Asked Questions

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If your question is not addressed in the document below, Please contact energystarhomes@energystar.gov.



Section 1: Rater Discretion

Raters are often in the position to make judgment calls with builders and trades on particular program requirements and best practices. The EPA provides this guidance:

The Rater must review all items on the Rater checklists. Raters are expected to use their experience and discretion to verify that the overall intent of each inspection checklist item has been met (i.e., identifying major defects that undermine the intent of the checklist item versus identifying minor defects that the Rater may deem acceptable). The column titled “N/A,” which denotes items that are “not applicable,” should be used when the checklist item is not present in the home or conflicts with local requirements.

Questions to consider when making determinations:

- What is the intent of this requirement or checklist item? Is the builder/trade using techniques and materials that either meet the requirement or negate the need for this requirement?
- Does the installed method/measure sacrifice comfort, energy use, building durability, indoor air quality or safety?
- Can we determine that this requirement is covered by code, insurance requirement, or other third-party program requirement?
- Can the builder/trade provide documentation of this alternative compliance?

Raters are the most knowledgeable agents to determine whether a builder is meeting the intent and concepts behind ENERGY STAR® Homes. If Raters feels strongly about an allowance or deviation from program requirements, they should work with their Providers, track decisions, and record the logic and calculations that helped them arrive at their conclusion. This information should be retained in the Rater’s records along with the checklists.

In the event that a Rater is not able to determine whether an item is consistent with the intent (e.g., an alternative method of meeting a checklist requirement has been proposed), then the Rater shall consult their Provider. If the Provider also cannot make this determination, then the Rater or Provider shall report the issue to EPA prior to project completion at: energystarhomes@energystar.gov and will typically receive an initial response within 10 business days. If EPA believes the current program requirements are sufficiently clear to determine whether the intent has been met, then this guidance will be provided to the partner and enforced beginning with the house in question. In contrast, if EPA believes the program requirements require revisions to make the intent clear, then this guidance will be provided to the partner but only enforced for homes permitted after a specified transition period after the release of the revised program requirements, typically 60 days in length.

Section 2: Partner Participation

1) Should I be a Rater, Rating Field Inspector (RFI), Verifier or Performance Tester for ENERGY STAR Home certification?

To perform an energy rating on a home, you must be a credentialed RESNET Rater (as of January 1, 2015).

To perform field verification and performance testing, you must be a RESNET Rater or Rating Field Inspector (RFI) (as of July 1, 2015).

2) Do Northwest builders and Raters need to become ENERGY STAR Partners? How do I sign up?



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Yes. Builders and Raters working on homes seeking whole-home ENERGY STAR certification must become partners with the national ENERGY STAR Certified Homes program.

Complete an ENERGY STAR Partner Agreement by visiting [this page](#). There is no cost to become an ENERGY STAR partner. Partner Agreement requirements vary by partner type. Contact the national ENERGY STAR Certified Homes program with additional partner agreement questions at energystarhomes@energystar.gov.

3) What is required of HVAC contractors to participate in the program and perform work on ENERGY STAR homes?

Contractors who install heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) systems in homes which are being built to ENERGY STAR specifications in Idaho, Montana, Oregon and Washington must become credentialed through a national HVAC Quality Installation and Oversight Organization (H-QUITO). H-QUITOs are the independent, third-party oversight organizations that provide the required training and oversight activities for HVAC contractors working on homes seeking ENERGY STAR certification. There are two national credentialing programs:

- ACCA (Air Conditioning Contractors of America)
- Advanced Energy

Credentialing requirements, costs and participation guidelines are specified by each H-QUITO. More information about HVAC Contractor credentialing and contact information for the H-QUITOs can be found [HERE](#).

Homes with a split air conditioner, unitary air conditioner, air-source heat pump, or water-source (i.e., geothermal) heat pump up to 65 kBtuh with a forced-air distribution system (i.e., ducts) or a furnace up to 225 kBtuh with ducts are required to use a credentialed HVAC contractor. All other permutations of equipment (e.g., boilers, mini-split / multi-split systems, zonal systems) and distribution systems are exempt and, therefore, do not require a credentialed contractor.

Section 3: Certification Requirements

1) What certification specifications do I use?

For all homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016: Use either the Northwest ENERGY STAR Single-Family Requirements or Multifamily Builder Option Packages (BOPs) for Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification.

For single-family homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016: Use the national program Version 3 or 3.1 specifications with ENERGY STAR HERS Index Target Procedure for national ENERGY STAR homes certification. ENERGY STAR versions are specific to each state. Review the national program's [Northwest landing page](#) for more information.

For multifamily homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016: BOTH the Northwest Multifamily BOP AND the national program single-family certification requirements will be accepted until December 31, 2016, at which point only the national program single-family certification will result in an ENERGY STAR label.

2) What are the minimum requirements? Can I make tradeoffs?



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For single-family homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016 and seeking Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification: While builders have some flexibility in constructing their homes, certain minimums must be met. Minimums are in place for items such as duct leakage, heat pump efficiencies, ventilation, slab insulation, programmable thermostats, certain appliances, and hot water pipe insulation. Revision 08 Checklists are required and specific modeling guidelines must be followed using Northwest REM/Rate™. For more information, please see the Modeling Guidelines for Northwest REM/Rate and Northwest ENERGY STAR Single-Family Homes Requirements.

For single-family homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016: All homes must meet the national ENERGY STAR Program Requirements and HERS Index Target procedure.

For multifamily homes permitted in 2015 or 2016 and using the Northwest Multifamily BOP: All prescriptive BOP minimums must be met. The only substitutions allowed within the Multifamily BOP are thermal envelope trade-offs. You can propose an overall building UA trade-off as long as the measure being traded doesn't represent 33 percent or more of the building's surface area. A UA trade-off allows the builder to reduce R-value in one assembly while increasing the R-value elsewhere in the building envelope such that the total building thermal envelope UA (U-factor multiplied by assembly area) is less than or equal to the total UA when built according to the Multifamily BOP. In order to demonstrate compliance, a Rater must complete a UA calculation according to the ASHRAE Handbook of Fundamentals or in allowance with local code UA compliance workbooks.

3) What is the difference between ENERGY STAR “Versions” and “Revisions”?

In general, Versions affect minimum construction and energy use requirements to stay ahead of code. Revisions are made in between Versions to clarify, simplify, and improve the program with the aim of improving compliance and usability.

What is Revision 08?

Driven by partner feedback, Revision 08 modified the mandatory checklists and was developed to improve the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes program in the following ways:

1. Streamline requirements that provide the most value.
2. Eliminate requirements that create the most hassle, and provide the least value.
3. Better align the process for ENERGY STAR certification with a HERS rating.

4) What field checklists should I use?

The national Revision 08 checklists should be used for Northwest ENERGY STAR homes permitted on / after July 1, 2015 and may be used for national ENERGY STAR homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016. Although the national program will not be enforcing the use of Revision 08 checklists until July 1, 2016, Raters and builders are encouraged to use Revision 08 checklists for national certification as soon as possible to acclimate to these newer checklist requirements. The Revision 08 checklists are:

- Rater Design Review and Rater Field checklists
 - Note: Design review is completed while home is in design or construction phase, field checklist is completed while home is in construction phase
- HVAC Design Report
 - Note: Only Sections 1 (Design Overview) and 2 (Whole-House Mechanical Ventilation Design) of the HVAC Design Report are required for boilers, mini-split / multi-split systems, electric resistance, or other zonal systems.
- HVAC Commissioning Checklist



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- Note: The HVAC Commissioning Checklist is not required for boilers, mini-split / multi-split systems, electric resistance, or other zonal systems.
- Water Management System Builder requirements
 - Note: The Water Management System Builder requirements document is no longer a checklist to complete. It should, however, be reviewed with builders on each home or multifamily building, as builders are responsible for ensuring that the details have been met.

Review the checklists under the “Complete Mandatory Measures” section of this page.

5) Do multifamily buildings have different checklist requirements?

The Revision 08 checklists are used for both site-built homes and multifamily dwelling units. Just like the site-built program, each dwelling unit must either be individually inspected or inspected as part of a sampled group using RESNET’s sampling protocol. With regards to documentation, one document can be used to represent multiple dwelling units, as long as:

1. The information on the document is applicable to all dwelling units represented by that document, and,
2. Each dwelling unit can be tied back to a specific document.

For example, a Rater may choose to individually inspect each dwelling unit but retain only the following documents (**this is currently the method used for the Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification**):

- Rater Field Checklist: one per floor
- HVAC Design Report: one per system
- Rater Design Review Checklist: one per system
- HVAC Commissioning Checklist: one per system

This would be acceptable as long as the two conditions above are met. If, for example, a homeowner complaint arises on a specific unit, the Rater would need to be able to identify which verification document applies to that specific unit and that the document reflects the characteristics of that specific dwelling unit.

6) What if the project is receiving a Northwest utility incentive?

All homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016 and seeking Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification must be entered into the Axis database by December 31st, 2016 for certification and utility incentive review.

For homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 that are following national program specifications and receiving utility incentives:

- Build and verify home using single-family national specifications or Northwest Multifamily BOP
- For single-family: Run a NW Compliance Report in Northwest REM/Rate to determine whether the home meets or beats energy consumption of the Northwest Reference Homes
- Run a national HERS Index Target report in national REM/Rate to determine national program compliance and certification (single-family or non-BOP multifamily)
- Enter the home data into the Axis database for utility tracking and review (both single-family and multifamily)

At this time, many Northwest utilities are only able to claim savings and issue incentives on the regional single-family Northwest Reference Homes or multifamily BOP compliance procedure used prior to shifting to national specs and HERS Index. Homes must be entered into Axis by December 31, 2016 and individual



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utilities or Providers may also ask Raters to upload NW Compliance Reports based on the state-specific Northwest Reference Homes.

7) What is the timeline for completing Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes?

Homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016 (Northwest specs): Homes must be entered into Axis Database by 12/31/2016. Please check with the Better Built NW team or local utility program if projects are expected to continue beyond March 31st, 2017.

Homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 (national specs) AND receiving Northwest utility incentives and savings: Homes must be entered into Axis Database by 12/31/2016. Please check with local utility program if projects are expected to continue beyond October 1st, 2017.

Homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 (national specs) and **not** receiving utility incentives: The Axis database or Provider reporting methodology may be used and there are no construction / certification due dates. In all cases, check with your Provider for the final word on certification / labeling requirements and timelines.

8) What should I do with ENERGY STAR labels and homeowner certificates?

Labels: The blue ENERGY STAR labels are necessary for both Northwest and national certifications. These labels should be placed in homes on the breaker box for homeowners and real estate professionals to review.

- If the home is processed in the Axis database for Northwest program certification, labels may be generated via Axis by going to Reports -> Printing -> ENERGY STAR Labels.
- If the home is processed outside of the Axis database for national program certification, check with your Provider.

Homeowner certificates: Homeowner certificates are also required and must be provided to the homeowner, builder, and / or Real Estate professional for verification of the homes certification.

- If the home is processed in the Axis database for Northwest program certification, homeowner certificates may be generated via Axis by going to Reports -> Printing -> Home Certificates. **The Northwest branded certificate may only be used on Northwest program certifications.** A national program certificate is not available at this time in Axis.

The Axis database also offers general Program Reports that may be generated by visiting the Home Detail Page of the home record, clicking on the program name, then clicking the Report button on the program.

- If the home is processed outside of the Axis database for national program certification, check with your Provider.

9) What are the certification requirements for accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and attached apartments where the primary residence is an ENERGY STAR certified single-family home? What are the insulation requirements of attached apartments and ADUs?

Only dwelling units are eligible to be certified, where a dwelling unit is defined, per the 2009 IECC, as “a single unit that provides complete independent living facilities for one or more persons, including permanent provisions for living, sleeping, eating, cooking, and sanitation.”



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EPA recommends, but does not require, that multiple dwelling units that are constructed on a single property (e.g., condos, townhomes, a dwelling unit above a detached garage that is on the same property as a single-family home) all be certified.

10) How are multifamily buildings defined for ENERGY STAR Homes?

The EPA uses the same certification process for both single family detached homes, as well as all multifamily projects that meet the following criteria:

- Dwelling units in any multifamily building with 4 units or fewer; OR
- Dwelling units in multifamily buildings with 3 stories or fewer above-grade; OR
- Dwelling units in multifamily buildings with 4 or 5 stories above-grade that have their own heating, cooling, and hot water systems, separate from other units, and where dwelling units occupy 80% or more of the occupiable square footage of the building. When evaluating mixed-use buildings for eligibility, exclude commercial / retail space when assessing whether the 80% threshold has been met.

11) How does the sampling method work for verifying single-family homes or multifamily units?

For Northwest and national single-family homes, as well as multifamily homes following the national single-family certification process, Raters should complete a Sampling Agreement with their RESNET Sampling Approved Provider and follow the sampling protocol in Chapter 6 of the RESNET Standards .

For multifamily projects following the Northwest Multifamily BOP, Raters and Providers should complete a Northwest Multifamily BOP Sampling Agreement, which can be found on the EPA's Northwest landing page.

Assuming this Sampling Agreement is in place, Raters and builders may follow the same RESNET sampling standards for single-family and multifamily units with one significant difference for multifamily: instead of sample inspecting an individual home or batching groups of homes, a Rater would sample inspect an individual unit or batch of units within a development. If a new development or multifamily complex will be subject to sampling, notify your Provider in advance.

If the builder is seeking incentives, the Rater should confirm with the local utility or incentive program that sampled homes will qualify. In many cases, anywhere up to 100 percent inspection and testing may be required.

12) When did the requirement for third-party duct testing (Raters instead of HVAC contractors) go into effect?

Since the January 1, 2016 transition to home certification under the national program. Version 3 and 3.1 homes, regardless of Revision 07 or Revision 08 checklists, require Raters or RFIs to perform testing and commissioning.

Historically, HVAC contractors in the Northwest have tested their own ducts. However, third-party verification is a key component of the ENERGY STAR program, and third-party testing of duct leakage has been specifically required for the national program since its inception in the 1990s. Therefore, with proper planning, EPA anticipates that this requirement will also be viable in the Northwest, and will deliver even greater assurance that the duct system is performing as designed.

13) Under Revision 08, will duct testing be defined as CFM@50 or change to the national metric of CFM@25?

Revision 08 calls for the national metric of CFM@25pa. Please use this definition in all cases except where CFM@50pa is tied to a Northwest utility incentive in your area. In those cases, CFM@25 may be translated to CFM@50 manually or by manometer functionality.



Section 4: HVAC Systems

1) What HVAC design software is recommended?

HVAC designers may use ACCA approved Manual J or alternate H-QUITO approved software as long as it can provide all the necessary information to complete the HVAC Design Report.

2) For HVAC systems designed using software, is it acceptable for a builder or the Rater to enter the HVAC contractor's actual layout into the HVAC design software?

Yes. Ultimately, the designer who completes the HVAC Design Report is responsible for the accuracy of the design. However, the project superintendent, builder, or Rater may assist with this process, under the direction of the designer, by entering the duct layout into the HVAC design software.

3) Does a forced-air duct system need to be designed using HVAC design software? What is the minimum amount of duct design that the contractor must perform with design software?

Room heating and cooling loads must be designed using a methodology approved by your H-QUITO. A contractor may perform manual hand calculations and use an air duct calculator for duct design as long as it meets the intent and requirements set forth by the H-QUITO. Even if the contractor does not want to use a specific software program to design the HVAC system, the contractor must still use an approved methodology per the HVAC Design Report – Unabridged ACCA Manual J v8, 2013 ASHRAE Fundamentals, or other methodology mandated by the Authority Having Jurisdiction.

4) What are the spot ventilation requirements for fans located in an ENERGY STAR certified home?

The program requires that all full bathroom and kitchen spot ventilation fans used within the home be ENERGY STAR rated, with the following requirements:

- Bathroom exhaust fans used in half bathrooms are not required to meet any flow or sound rating specifications, nor do they need to be ENERGY STAR rated
- Kitchen exhaust fans must meet ASHRAE 62.2 or local code requirements, whichever is more stringent. ASHRAE 62.2 requires kitchen exhaust fans to be rated at a minimum of 100 CFM, and recommended to be 3 sones or less. Kitchen exhaust fans that exhaust 400 CFM of air or greater are exempt from any sone rating requirements, but they must be able to operate at multiple speeds via a switch. In some states, if the kitchen fan is equal to or greater than 400 CFM, additional make-up air is required. Please consult your building/energy/mechanical codes for clarification.
- To view the ENERGY STAR Certified Fans list, [CLICK HERE](#)

5) For ducts inside the thermal boundary and air barrier, do the register boots have to be sealed to the interior air barrier? For instance, where ducts are feeding ceiling registers into first-floor rooms, do those register boots have to be sealed to the sheetrock?

It depends. The ENERGY STAR program does not require air sealing boots to sheetrock connections in ducts-inside scenarios where these duct terminations are located in interstitial space within the thermal and pressure boundary of the home if the home is receiving both duct leakage to exterior and building tightness testing at final. Air sealing at these locations would be considered a best practice technique, and although advisable, it is not strictly necessary in order to meet the checklist requirements. However, if the home's duct leakage is tested at rough inspection and will not need to be tested again at final, prescriptively sealing around boots is required.

6) My builder installed a ground source heat pump (GSHP) system on his home. The manufacturer of the system does not recommend commissioning on the unit, stating that the system is factory charged



with refrigerant. In addition, the manufacturer provides their own startup forms, which do not have the same requirements as CC&S or the HVAC Commissioning Checklist. Are these forms acceptable to meet ENERGY STAR Homes requirements?

The HVAC contractor should check with their H-QUITO to determine if the manufacturer's start-up forms qualify the system. Any manufacturer forms must be included in documentation to the Rater / RFI.

7) Is an HVAC Design Report required for homes / units with radiant or zonal-only heating strategies?

Homes / units that are zonally heated are currently exempt by the national ENERGY STAR homes program from needing anything other than Sections 1 (Design Overview) and 2 (Whole-House Mechanical Ventilation Design) of the HVAC Design Report completed.

8) Do ductless heat pumps require commissioning?

Contractors installing ductless heat pumps are not required to complete the HVAC Commissioning Checklist. Of course, ductless heat pumps should always be installed according to the manufacturer's specifications.

Section 5: Framing & Insulation

1) Are raised heel trusses required?

Raised heel trusses or any alternative method of framing and insulation that achieves R-21 at the inside edge of the top plates is permitted. While a raised heel truss is one option that increases the R-value at the top plate, other options include cantilevered trusses with wider overhangs, framing with a rafter plate, utilizing spray foam or rigid foam at the edge, or moving the attic ventilation up to the roof deck to eliminate baffles and increase space for insulation.

2) Can rigid foam be used on the attic side of knee wall framing members without the addition of fiberglass or other insulation in contact with drywall?

Rigid foam can be used on the attic side of the framing members. If installed complete and continuous, the foam serves as both the air and the thermal barrier. However, there are some considerations when choosing this strategy:

- Ensure local fire and smoke codes are met.
- Complete air sealing. The program recommends sealing joints and gaps with two-part spray foam, fire-rated caulk or mastic.

3) Is rigid backing required in a wall assembly located below grade when the assembly is spaced 2 inches off the concrete wall?

Rigid backing is required in these scenarios for the following reasons:

- Potential for air leakage through that area. Even though it is on a below-grade wall, that cavity is most likely still connected to some kind of air leakage pathway. This can result in air entering the insulation.
- Potential for convective looping. While most of that wall will have a reduced potential for convective looping due to the temperature differential being less than what it would be if the wall was above grade, that potential will not be completely eliminated.
- The rigid backing on one side will keep the insulation from slumping over time.

4) What are the minimum requirements for air sealing the rim / band area between floors for homes with ducts inside?



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While recommended but not required, the following should be followed when air sealing rim / band joist areas:

- Caulk or glue the bottom edge of the rim and joists to the top plate
- Caulk or glue the subfloor to the top edge of the rim and joists
- Caulk the vertical joints in rim material

The best practice approach is to seal the entire rim with spray foam. Another option is to “picture frame” the floor bays with caulk or foam.

Section 6: Water Heating

1) Are heat pump water heaters (HPWHs) allowed inside the conditioned space?

The ENERGY STAR program does not currently dictate where a HPWH must be installed. An unvented HPWH may be a poor idea in climates with low latent heat loads as it may lead directly to comfort issues.

2) Are demand recirculation pumps required?

On-demand recirculation is a part of many states adoption of the 2015 ICC codes. If the state the home is being built in is migrating to 2015 codes, then the builder and Rater are responsible for learning what amendments may be included that address energy efficiency, comfort, IAQ, safety, and building durability issues.

Section 7: Multifamily Homes

1) What are the blower door testing protocols for attached townhomes and multifamily buildings?

All blower door testing procedures shall be conducted according to RESNET standards. Attached townhomes shall be tested one unit at a time. Multifamily dwelling units being certified under the National ENERGY STAR label must also be tested individually.

2) Do I need to verify common areas in a multifamily building?

For Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes only, if the common areas are conditioned, they must meet the specifications of the ENERGY STAR program requirements and Revision 08 checklists. Unconditioned common areas such as stairwells and breezeways do not need to be verified. However, any conditioned space adjacent to these areas must be verified to meet the thermal and air barrier requirements of ENERGY STAR Homes.

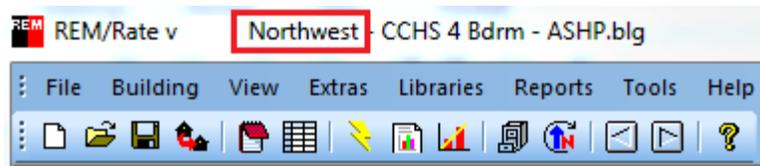
Section 8: REM/Rate™ Modeling

1) What is the correct version of REM/Rate? How do I know I have the correct version?

For single-family homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016 receiving Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification: The Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes program worked with NORESO to develop a Northwest version of REM/Rate that is adjusted for closer alignment with regionally accepted values and utility savings. The Northwest version is labeled “Northwest” in the heading bar when the program is open. Northwest REM/Rate version 14.6.1 should be used for Northwest ENERGY STAR certification.



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For single-family homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 receiving national certification or for multifamily homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 following the national single-family certification process: Homes being certified under the national program should use the most current, and accepted, version of national REM/Rate to complete the HERS Index target procedure.

For single-family homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 receiving utility incentives AND national certification: a Northwest Compliance Report must be run in NW REM/Rate version 14.6.1 to determine Northwest utility compliance in addition to running the ENERGY STAR Certified Homes report in national REM/Rate for national program compliance.

- Note, not all REM/Rate versions are fully forward and backward compatible, meaning if the .blg file is created in the most current and accepted version of REM/Rate, it may not open in earlier versions of REM/Rate. It is highly recommended to start and complete the energy model and regional compliance reports in the oldest required version of REM/Rate for your various regional or utility programs before saving the file (Northwest REM/Rate version 14.6.1 for Northwest ENERGY STAR or utility incentivized projects), then opening it in a more current version to run national HERs or ENERGY STAR homes reports.

2) How do I obtain the Northwest version of REM/Rate?

The Northwest version of REM/Rate can be obtained by replacing the ratek.ini file located within the directory of the national version of REM/Rate. Please contact your Provider to request this file.

3) Do I need to use approved REM/Rate libraries?

To model homes for Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification compliance or for Northwest utility incentives, Raters must use approved libraries in Northwest REM/Rate. The approved libraries are titled "Energy Trust of Oregon" and "Washington State University Energy Program." Please contact your Provider for the approved library files.

Follow RESNET guidelines for creating libraries in national REM/Rate for the national ENERGY STAR program or other programs / reports.

4) Is it OK to add library items in Northwest REM/Rate?

Yes, under certain circumstances. The approved libraries will cover the majority of entries into Northwest REM/Rate. However, if the Rater cannot find an entry in the approved Northwest REM/Rate libraries that matches a certain building assembly or piece of equipment, the Rater may create one. Please check with your Provider on guidance for creating new library entries.

5) I have questions about modeling a home in Northwest REM/Rate. Where should I look for guidance?

The first resource to check is the Northwest REM/Rate Modeling Guidelines. Modeling guidance can also be found through the help menu in Northwest REM/Rate, from your Provider, or from the REM/Rate website.

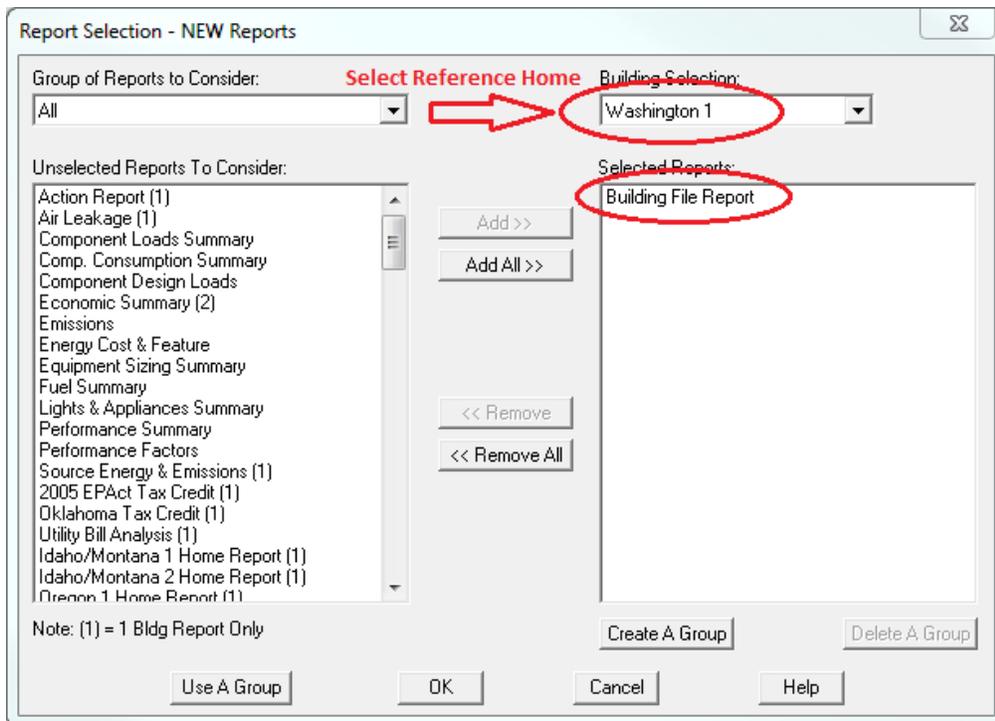
6) How do I know which measures are included in the Northwest Reference Home?



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The Northwest ENERGY STAR Single-Family Homes Requirements lists the Northwest Reference Home measures.

Another way to view the Northwest Reference Home measures is to run a Building File Report in Northwest REM/Rate. Click on “Reports,” then on “New Views/Selected Reports...”, then select “Building File Report” so it appears in the “Selected Reports” box. In the “Building Selection” box, select the appropriate Reference Home and click “OK.” This will show all REM/Rate entries used for your home and the Northwest Reference Home.



7) Will Northwest REM/Rate automatically select the appropriate Northwest Reference Home to compare to your home? Is it based on the climate zone or address of the project?

The state-specific Northwest Reference Homes are used statewide regardless of the climate zone or geographical location within that particular state. For example, the Washington Reference Home would be the same for a home built in Olympia (CZ 4) or Yakima (CZ 5). When running a Northwest Compliance Report, Northwest REM/Rate will not automatically select the appropriate Northwest Reference Home for your home, the user must manually select this when running the report.

8) What are Northwest Compliance Reports, and how do they determine if my project qualifies?

For a home to be certified under the Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes program or receive Northwest utility incentives, the home must meet or beat the annual fuel consumption of the Northwest Reference Home measured in MMBTU/yr. To run a Northwest Compliance Report, open your completed project in Northwest REM/Rate and click on “Reports,” then on “New Views/Selected Reports...” Select the appropriate Reference Home to compare the project to and click “OK.” Check the report to determine how total energy usage compares. The Northwest Compliance reports are:



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- Idaho / Montana 1 Home Report -1 indicates a home primarily heated with gas or a heat pump
- Idaho / Montana 2 Home Report -2 indicates a home primarily heated with electric resistance
- Oregon 1 Home Report
- Oregon 2 Home Report
- Washington 1 Old Home Report -for use on homes permitted prior to 12/1/14
- Washington 1 New Home Report -for use on homes permitted on or after 12/1/14
- Washington 2 Home Report

9) Can actual infiltration rates be entered into Northwest REM/Rate when modeling a home?

Not for Northwest ENERGY STAR homes. Until further notice, Raters must enter the infiltration rate of the Northwest Reference Home and not the actual tested rate of the home.

Modeling protocols for other programs and certifications may require the entry of actual infiltration rates. For example, if a national HERS Index Score is also being generated for the home, the .blg file must be opened and modeled in national REM/Rate, and actual infiltration values should be used.

10) Does the Northwest version of REM/Rate calculate a HERS Index Score that is approved by RESNET?

Not at this time. Currently, the .blg file must be opened in the national version of REM/Rate to obtain an approved HERS Index score.

11) When I run a Northwest Compliance Report in Northwest REM/Rate, it flags windows as not meeting the specification. What should I do?



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The home must still meet window U-value and SHGC requirements set forth by your state's energy code. However, it is OK for the Northwest Compliance Report to state that windows do not meet U-value or SHGC requirements. This will not prevent certification of the home as long as the home as a whole meets or beats the annual fuel usage as demonstrated in your state-specific Northwest Compliance Report.

12) Are there plans to create a ductless heat pump (DHP) selection in the “Mechanical Equipment” tab of REM/Rate?

NORESO is aware of the need of a DHP entry in REM/Rate and plans to create one in the future.

Specific instructions for modeling DHPs in Northwest REM/Rate are available in the Modeling Guidelines for Northwest REM/Rate for homes receiving Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification or utility incentives.

Section 9: Axis database

1) What are the partner roles in the Axis database?

RESNET Raters are provided accounts to enter home data.

RESNET Providers are provided accounts to review, certify, and QA home data.

Northwest Utilities are provided accounts to review home data.

Builders are not provided with Axis accounts at this time. Builders must be registered ENERGY STAR partners with the national program.

HVAC Contractors are not provided with Axis accounts at this time. HVAC Contractors must be registered with a national H-QUITO.

2) How do partners gain access to Axis?

Raters must be RESNET credentialed and partnered with a RESNET Provider participating in Northwest programs to be provided access to Axis.

Utilities should contact the Northwest program team.

3) How do I get started in the Axis database?

After gaining access to Axis, visit the Support Portal Rater or Provider forums for step-by-step guides and videos covering topics such as company associations, the home file creation and certification process, and steps to connect your REM/Rate software to submit .blg files. You may also contact Pivotal Energy Solutions or the Northwest program team for support and training.

4) What Axis database program should I use for home entry and certification?

For homes permitted on / after July 1, 2015 seeking Northwest ENERGY STAR Homes certification and for homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 seeking national certification with northwest utility incentives - use either of the following database programs:

- NW ENERGY STAR Version 3, natl Rev 08: Single Family Performance
- NW ENERGY STAR Version 3, natl Rev 08: Multifamily



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- Incentivized national certifications must be entered into the Axis database by 12/31/2016 under these Northwest programs for proper utility visibility
- Axis completion deadlines are TBD

Homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 (national specs) and not receiving utility incentives: The Axis database or unique Provider methodology may be used. Check with your Provider for non-incentivized national program certification / labeling process and procedures.

5) What should I do if my ENERGY STAR builder is not in Axis or I get an error message about the builder profile attached to the home in Axis?

All builders participating in either the Northwest or national program must be registered as a builder partner with the national ENERGY STAR program. Each night, Axis pulls in Northwest builder profile updates from the national ENERGY STAR program and all northwest builders are associated to the NEEA Sponsor account in Axis. The builder profile attached to the home must be an ENERGY STAR builder profile and also be associated to NEEA in Axis. If you need assistance resolving builder issues in the database, create an Axis support ticket by emailing support@pivotalenergysolutions.com.

6) What should I do if my HVAC contractor is not marked as H-QUITO approved in Axis or I get an error message about the HVAC contractor attached to the home in Axis?

All homes permitted on / after July 1, 2015 must have a national H-QUITO approved HVAC contractor attached to the home file in Axis for certification (both Northwest certification and national certification with utility incentives). The NEEA sponsor account and Northwest program team review ACCA and Advanced Energy credentialed contractor lists and mark the HVAC Company profile as H-QUITO credentialed in Axis as their credential is confirmed. If you need assistance resolving HVAC contractor issues in the database, create an Axis support ticket by emailing support@pivotalenergysolutions.com.

7) Do I need to connect my Northwest REM/Rate software program to the Axis database?

Yes. A one-time process must be performed to connect your Northwest REM/Rate account to the Axis database. Please visit the Axis support site and use REM/Rate Database Connector (MySQL ODBC) Setup for Export to Axis for instructions.

8) Should I upload the Northwest Compliance Report to Axis?

The Northwest Compliance Report results from Northwest REM/Rate are needed to determine whether the home meets or beats the fuel usage of the Northwest Reference Home for homes permitted prior to January 1, 2016 and receiving Northwest ENERGY STAR certification. This Northwest Compliance Report is also necessary for homes permitted on / after January 1, 2016 and receiving utility incentives while following national certification guidelines. It is recommended that Raters upload Northwest Compliance Reports to Axis; however, Provider discretion determines whether uploading the report is required.

9) Should I upload other documents to the home files in Axis?

It is recommended Raters upload other documents (e.g. checklists, photos) to homes in Axis; however, it is ultimately the discretion of Providers or local utility programs to require uploading documents.

10) Does Axis allow home entry and certification via sampling?



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Yes. There is a Sampling Control Center in Axis for Raters and Providers to enter, manage, and certify sample sets for both single-family and multifamily homes.

11) Who do I contact for additional Axis database questions or support?

Review the Axis Support Portal for training videos and other support articles. If the question or issue is not addressed in the Support Portal resources, file a support ticket by emailing support@pivotalenergysolutions.com or call the Axis support hotline at 800-980-AXIS (800-980-2947).