

# What are the main differences between the Massachusetts Base & Stretch energy codes?

April 2026

## New Construction - Residential



**Base Code:** Prescriptive, HERS, Passive House or Zero Energy compliance pathways.

**Stretch Code:** HERS or Passive House compliance pathways.

- ★ **Prescriptive** Base requires *more* ceiling insulation than Stretch (R-60 vs R-49).  
Base *Solar Heat Gain Coefficient* for windows is 0.40 max; Stretch has no max.  
The window *U-factor* is the same for both Base & Stretch.
- ★ Base & Stretch *both* require blower door tests.
- ★ Base & Stretch *both* require EV-ready spaces for new single family.

## What is Prescriptive Compliance ? What is HERS Compliance?

**Prescriptive Compliance** sets minimum requirements for building components & systems.

**HERS Compliance** (Home Energy Rating System) provides a score of a home's energy-efficiency. The lower the HERS rating, the better the building performance. HERS compliance means the home will achieve a verified level of energy efficiency.

| Stretch Code Table R406.5: Maximum HERS Index Score |                                             |                                                   |                          |                                                |
|-----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------------------------|
|                                                     | New construction permits after July 1, 2024 | New construction w/ R406.5 embodied carbon credit | Accessory Dwelling Units | Major alterations, additions, or change of use |
| Mixed-Fuel Building                                 | 42                                          | 45                                                | 52                       | 65                                             |
| Solar Electric Generation                           | 42                                          | 45                                                | 55                       | 70                                             |
| All-Electric Building                               | 42                                          | 45                                                | 55                       | 70                                             |
| Solar Electric & All-Electric Building              | 45                                          | 48                                                | 58                       | 75                                             |

**What are embodied carbon credits?**  
Projects that use insulation or concrete with low Global Warming Potential can receive **3** extra HERS points.

## Existing Construction - Residential

**Base Code:** Alterations & Additions follow the Prescriptive compliance pathway.

**Stretch Code:** Small Alterations & Additions follow the **Prescriptive** compliance pathway. Large Additions and Major Alterations follow **HERS**.

*Major Alteration* = work area > 50% of existing sq. ft. & also > 1,000 sq. ft. or >100% of existing sq. ft.  
*Large Addition* = ≥ 1,000 sq. ft. or ≥ 100% of the existing

## Stretch Code - Fast Facts

- ★ **Mass Save incentives** for energy efficient construction.
- ★ Homes can be **All-Electric** or **Mixed Fuel**.
- ★ **Energy Savings:** Homes built under the Stretch Code are more efficient — **less** energy to heat & cool equals **cost savings on utility bills**.



**Questions?** Email  
stretchcode@mass.gov



MASSACHUSETTS  
**DEPARTMENT OF  
ENERGY RESOURCES**