

# CHAPTER 10: Residential Energy Conservation

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Housing elements must include a review of opportunities to encourage energy conservation in residential development (California Government Code Sec. 65583(a)(7)).

Energy conservation policies could reduce housing costs, promote sustainable design, and help reduce greenhouse gases. Title 24 of the California Administrative Code sets mandatory energy efficiency standards for development.

The California Department of Housing and Development encourages jurisdictions to take steps toward better energy conservation through their housing element updates. Plumas County is doing its part through Programs H 1.3, H 3.3, and H 3.4 that support the implementation of the California Building Code, enforcement of Title 24, and encouragement of County residents to participate in energy efficiency programs. Additional local, regional, and state energy conservation resources are listed below. There are also ideas listed on HCD's website to help jurisdictions and residents address energy conservation.

## Energy Conservation Resources

### California Solar Initiative Rebates

Rebates vary according to system size, customer class, and performance and installation factors (<https://www.gosolarcalifornia.org/>). There are two rebate programs: Expected Performance-Based Buydown (for systems that are less than 30 kilowatts) and Performance-Based Incentive (for all systems greater than 30 kilowatts).

### Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing

The Solar on Multifamily Affordable Housing (SOMAH) provides incentives for solar energy photovoltaic systems for multifamily affordable housing (<http://www.calsomah.org/>). SOMAH is overseen by the California Utilities Commission and offers financial incentives for to all qualified affordable multifamily apartment homes to aid in solar installation costs.

The Expected Performance Based Buydown (EPBB) is paid based on verified solar system characteristics such as location, shading, and orientation. At least 51% of the system's electric output must directly offset tenant load and be provided to tenants in the form of virtual net energy metering bill credits. Property owners/managers can choose to prioritize incentive allocation toward tenant use or common area use.

### Federal Solar Investment Tax Credit

The Federal Investment Tax Credit (ITC) for residential and commercial solar systems is 30 percent of net system cost. This tax credit is available on residential properties that commence construction by 2019. The ITC then steps down to 26 percent in 2020 and 22 percent in 2021. After 2023, the residential credit will drop to zero, while the commercial and utility credit will drop to a permanent 10 percent. As of 2022, the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) provides for a 30 percent Solar Tax Credit until 2033, when it will drop to 26 percent. In 2034, it is reduced to 22 percent, falling to 0 percent in 2035.

## Pacific Gas and Electric Company

PG&E serves the electrical needs in Plumas County. PG&E offers the following energy conservation programs as of June 2025 (<https://www.pge.com/>):

- **Automated Response Technology program:** participants enable an authorized provider to optimize energy use according to the rate and during times of very high grid demand. Participating may qualify residents for rebates or incentives.
- **Free Online Home Energy Checkups:** discover how much of your home energy goes to heating, hot water, appliances, lighting and other uses. It's fast, easy and costs you nothing. Answer a few basic questions about your home and how you use energy, get an estimate of what's using energy in your home, and get personalized suggestions that can help save energy and reduce costs.
- **Zero Net Energy (ZNE) program:** Began in 2010 to support the 2008 California Long Term Energy Efficiency Strategic Plan; ZNE goals state that all new residential construction will be ZNE by 2020. Developers can find the ZNE Builder Resource Guide from PG&E online.
- **Rebate Programs:** Offers a range of rebates on energy-saving products for residential owners.
- **Energy Savings Assistance (ESA) Program:** Income-eligible customers have the opportunity to upgrade home appliances, furnaces, and lighting to more energy efficient options at no charge.
- **Energy Upgrade California Home Upgrade rebate program:** offers rebates of up to \$3,000 for homeowners in single-family detached homes who make energy-efficient upgrades to their homes. The program encourages a whole-house approach, requiring at least one base measure and a total of three or more upgrades, such as insulation, air sealing, and HVAC replacements.

There are no natural gas service lines in Plumas County. Therefore, energy consumption in the County is predominantly electricity use. As an alternative to natural gas, residents and businesses utilize private propane tank services or a fuel oil provider.

## Local Programs

### Plumas County Community Development Commission

The Low-Income Weatherization Program through PCCDC offers eligible households the opportunity to install energy efficiency improvements at no cost. Upgrades include weather stripping, insulation, door repairs, storm windows, ducting repair, vent covers, and energy efficiency improvements (compact fluorescent and LED light bulbs, thermostats, replacement of water heaters, space heating systems, and refrigerators). The 2024-2029 conservation/preservation Quantified Objectives assumptions are based on the historical annual average number of clients (i.e., 51 in 2023 and 49 in 2024) served by PCCDC through their weatherization programs. For more information visit: [https://plumascdc.org/pdf/weather\\_20.pdf](https://plumascdc.org/pdf/weather_20.pdf)

PCCDC also offers the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) to eligible households whose gross annual income is below the qualifying income limits. HEAP helps with home energy costs (wood, propane, fuel oil, and electricity) by making payment to a utility company on behalf of the household. For example, a payment can be made to the energy provider; or if wood is the primary heating source, a payment for wood delivery can be made to qualified wood suppliers. Emergency assistance payments may also be available to households who receive a shut-off notice is received. For more information visit:

<http://www.plumascdc.org/energy.html>

## **Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative**

Plumas-Sierra Rural Electric Cooperative provides helpful advice on energy conservation. Consumers can utilize online tools to perform an energy audit and online calculators to help households estimate the cost of operating appliances and powering a home. Additional information on energy cost savings is available at:

<https://www.psrec.coop/energy/conservation-tips-tools/>

The Winter Rate Assistance Program (WRAP) offers a discounted rate to income-qualifying members during the winter heating season (i.e., November through April). Program eligibility is based on family income, using an annual income of up to 190% of the federal poverty standard as qualifying eligibility. Additional information can be found at:

<https://www.psrec.coop/services/low-income-assistance/>