

Title 24 & CALGreen Building Code Changes--Are We Ready?

By Kathy Gottberg (6/23/10)



A recent workshop sponsored by Desert Cities Energy Partnership was held at the UCR-PD Campus to provide information about the updates to the Title 24 Building Code in California, as well as the new CALGreen Codes that will go into effect January 1, 2011. While primarily geared to building contractors, and city and county building code staffs, the workshop also offered vital information that will ultimately affect every resident of the Coachella Valley.

The Desert Cities Energy Partnership (DCEP) is collaboration between CVAG (CV Assoc. of Governments) and their 10 member cities as well as Southern California Edison (SCE), Imperial Irrigation District (IID) and Southern California Gas Company (SCG). It was formed to help meet regional economic and environmental goals and is funded by the CA Public Utilities Commission (PUC) through 2012, so the cost for DCEP does not deplete any city budget. Besides educating local residents on energy efficiency, the partnership also allows for additional rebates and incentive programs for those involved.

The "Title 24 & Green Building Code Workshop" was one of the first outreach programs undertaken by the DCEP. Mark Kindelberger, Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Business Development for Consol, a private energy consultation firm in Stockton, offered clarification on recent updates to Title 24 and the new CALGreen. Handouts and a detailed slide presentation explained some of the complicated steps that Title 24 requires and even raised questions about the ability of cities, counties and local builders to actually comply.



From an environmental standpoint, the good news is that Title 24 is, on an average, 50% more stringent than the building codes in the rest of the United States. Clearly, CA is the national leader when it comes to building green. But at what cost? According to a study by the CA Building Industry in 2009, every single family home costs an average of \$2,000 more and every multi-family unit \$1,500 than those without the code. Plus, according to Kindelberger, nearly 70% of new homes right now have not completed the necessary paperwork required by Title 24 since January 2010. In his opinion, the lack of completion of this complicated paperwork and third-party verifications is a train wreck waiting to happen. It is unclear what the fallout might be when that occurs.

On top of that, the new 2010 CALGreen Building requirements go into effect on January 2011. CALGreen implements CA Code AB 32 and is actually just another name for the Part 11 of Title 24 with the intention to interact with other parts of Title 24. CALGreen applies to all buildings in California except for industrial or retrofits—in other words, residential, commercial and public buildings. Online research shows that CALGreen initially asks for mostly voluntary provisions, with mandatory provisions that require only incremental change in the beginning. Plus, CALGreen appears to offer an alternative to other certification processes like LEED, although the method of enforcement and verification has not been determined. However, according to

Kindelberger, these regulations will significantly increase the requirements of Title 24 within a couple of years and very quickly become more rigorous and therefore more costly. Anyone who is involved in the planning, building or designing of new buildings in the future needs to be aware of these provisions.

While every resident in California will eventually be touched by these codes one way or another, the real impact to most of us will be as a consequence to these new requirements. The most obvious result will be the increased demand and value that will alternatively be applied to existing property. In other words, the value of existing properties is sure to stabilize and rise in contrast to all the new requirements and costs that will come to new



construction.

Another repercussion of the CALGreen will be renewed interest and focus on retrofitting buildings rather than building new. It was revealed that another new program will launch in September named "Energy Upgrade CA" which will offer rebates for homeowners who complete a variety of whole-house energy efficient upgrades.

That program will require new training and certification from energy inspectors and building contractors in order to qualify to complete the work. At the present time there are no contractors in the Coachella Valley that are certified. Not only will this program, along with proposed Federal Rebate program dubbed, "Cash for Caulkers," help increase the energy efficiency of existing buildings, it will stimulate green collar jobs, improve green technologies and get money flowing in the local residential construction business. That in turn will positively affect us all.

The Title 24 & Green Building Workshop offered more than mere discussion about building codes and what energy-efficient elements are the most cost effective in a new house for the least amount of money. (Think radiant barriers, tight ducts and max cooling capacities.) What was stressed during the discussion was that changes are coming and what residents, cities and municipalities should do to be prepared. It was also good, as reminded by workshop speaker Mark Kindelberger, for every homeowner and property owner to first and foremost always, "become energy efficient first."

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