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Los Angeles Area Post-Fire Rebuild Code Upgrade Research

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Region: Pacific Palisades / Altadena / Greater Los Angeles Area

Research regarding code upgrade changes or waivers when preparing rebuild estimates following the January 7, 2025 fires in Los Angeles. Very little will change regarding the building code requirements. The following is an outline of mandatory code upgrades triggered by rebuilding, organized by jurisdiction and scope.

Code Upgrades Overview:

Rebuilding a home after destruction by fire in California generally requires compliance with the most current version of the California Building Standards Code (Title 24), as well as any applicable local amendments. The following upgrades are typically required:

1. Solar Photovoltaic (PV) System and Battery Backups

- Mandated for new residential construction under 2019 California Building Energy Efficiency Standards.
- On July 7, 2025, Governor Gavin Newsom issued Executive Order N-29-25, which temporarily suspended these requirements for wildfire rebuilds. This suspension unintentionally limited insurance claimants from accessing Ordinance and Law or Code Upgrade coverage for solar and battery systems, leaving many without twenty to one hundred thousand dollars of potential benefits.
- On November 24, 2025, Governor Newsom issued Executive Order [EO N-37-25](#). This order updated and clarified N-29-25,
- Under the updated order, homeowners who are rebuilding after a wildfire may choose to rebuild to the current energy standards if they have available insurance proceeds under Ordinance and Law or Code Upgrade coverage. This restores homeowner choice and ensures claimants can access all available benefits.
- As of the date of this paper, claimants may elect to include solar panels and battery backup systems in their rebuild and apply their O and L or Code Upgrade coverage toward those costs.



2. Fire Sprinkler Systems

- Required for all new one- and two-family dwellings per the California Residential Code (CRC R313).
- Applies to homes being rebuilt, regardless of original structure having sprinklers.

3. Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

- Required throughout dwelling per CRC sections R314 and R315.
- Hardwired with battery backup.

4. High-Efficacy Lighting

- Required in all interior and exterior lighting installations under Title 24, Part 6.

5. Energy-Efficient Insulation and Glazing

- Rebuilds must meet or exceed insulation standards for ceilings, walls, and floors.
- Windows must comply with U-factor and SHGC (solar heat gain coefficient) requirements.

6. Water-Conserving Plumbing Fixtures

- Per CALGreen Code: low-flow toilets, showerheads, and faucets are mandatory.

7. Electric Vehicle (EV) Charging Readiness

- New homes must include infrastructure to support future EV charger installation.

8. All-Electric Readiness (Where Applicable)

- The City of Los Angeles suspended its mandatory all-electric ordinance for fire victims.
- However, new construction in some LA County areas may still require or encourage electrification.

9. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Standards

- Applies to homes in high fire severity zones (e.g., Pacific Palisades, Altadena).
- Includes fire-resistant roofing, ember-resistant vents, ignition-resistant exterior walls, and defensible space.
- Source: California Building Code Chapter 7A, CalFire WUI Maps.



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10. Accessibility & Stair Geometry (Where Applicable) 11

- Handrails, tread/riser ratios, guardrails must meet current code standards even if rebuilt to same footprint.

11. Coastal Act and CEQA

- July 7, 2025 Executive Order Expands suspensions of the Coastal Act and CEQA in the city of Los Angeles, creating parity among homeowners in the city and allowing homeowners to fast-track their entire rebuilding project.
- Expands existing Coastal Act and CEQA exemptions to streamline rebuilding public schools, getting kids back in neighborhood public schools faster.

12. Updates to Building Code on January 1, 2026

- Suspends changes to building codes that would go into effect on January 1, 2026, when not all homeowners will have finalized their plans to rebuild, to create certainty for homeowners and avoid the need to change plans, while retaining updated fire safety requirements.

Resources:

City of Los Angeles (Pacific Palisades), County of Los Angeles (Altadena/parts of Malibu), City of Malibu

- Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety (LADBS)
<https://www.ladbs.org>
- CalMatters, Claims Journal

Los Angeles County (Altadena)

- LA County Department of Public Works – Building and Safety Division
<https://recovery.lacounty.gov/rebuilding/>
- WUI compliance and full Title 24 adherence required.

Green Rebuild Resources

- Clean Coalition's Green Rebuild Initiative: pre-approved, net-zero design templates for rebuilds
<https://clean-coalition.org>

California Governor's Office

- <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2025/07/07/six-months-after-the-la-fires-nations-fastest-residential-cleanup-nears-completion-as-governor-newsom-signs-streamlining-executive-order-joins-local-leaders-to-unveil-blueprint-for-rebuild/>
- <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/FINAL-2025-11-24-Sewers-Insurance-Housing-Priority.pdf>

Application in Estimates:

When preparing scope of loss estimates involving full rebuilds, estimators must include line items for each triggered code upgrade. This research will help inform the sheet BW Builder has developed with jurisdictional references and state codes. Any accurate estimate should show inclusion of all current building codes save for those recently suspended.