



Southwest Energy Efficiency Project
Saving Money and Reducing Pollution through Energy Conservation

PRESS RELEASE

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For Further Information Contact:
Howard Geller: 303-447-0078 x1
Jill Cliburn: 505-474-7313

BUILDING CODE UPDATE WILL CUT ENERGY BILLS IN NEW MEXICO

(Santa Fe, NM) -- The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) applauds the December 19, 2003 adoption of the 2003 version of the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC) by New Mexico's Construction Industries Commission. The updated building code will apply to new homes and commercial buildings built in New Mexico starting in July 2004. With this action, New Mexico joins 24 other states that have adopted a relatively current version of the IECC.

“This up-to-date energy code will make new buildings in New Mexico less expensive to operate and more comfortable,” said Dr. Howard Geller, SWEEP's Executive Director. “The energy code will also lead to the use of higher quality construction materials and building techniques, thereby upgrading the skills and practices of New Mexico's construction industry.”

SWEEP estimates that the updated energy code will save households and businesses in New Mexico about \$170 million net during 2005-2020. This estimate is based on the projected energy cost savings from constructing more efficient new homes and commercial buildings in the state, a sum that accounts for the small incremental cost for building these new buildings energy efficiently.

“There is a great deal of potential for improving the efficiency of energy use in New Mexico in general. Updating the state's building code represents a significant step towards less energy waste and lower energy costs,” commented Jill Cliburn, SWEEP's New Mexico representative. “And by reducing electricity consumption, the new energy code will cut water consumption at power plants across New Mexico.”

Chris Wentz, Director of the New Mexico Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department's Energy Conservation and Management Division, reacted positively to this action. “We commend the Commission for its vision and leadership in adopting a building code that will result in much more energy-efficient homes and offices across the state,” said Wentz. “Homeowners, businesses, and all New Mexico taxpayers will benefit from the Commission's actions through reduced energy consumption in residential dwellings as well as public-sector buildings.”

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The state's Construction Industries Division will consider amendments to the new building code before it is finalized and goes into effect next summer. SWEEP urges the Division not to adopt any amendments that would weaken the energy code. "The IECC is cost-effective and relatively easy to meet in New Mexico," stated Geller. "Any amendments which weaken the code, such as higher allowances for lighting electricity use in commercial buildings, will mean unnecessary energy use and higher energy bills for New Mexico's consumers and businesses."

About SWEEP: The Southwest Energy Efficiency Project (SWEEP) is a public interest organization dedicated to advancing energy efficiency in Arizona, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah, and Wyoming. For more information, visit the SWEEP website at www.swenergy.org.