

5. Energy

5.1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires evaluation of a project’s potential energy use-related impacts and for ways in which the project could reduce unnecessary energy consumption, such as increasing its efficiency and use of *renewable energy*. This issue is addressed in Appendix F of the State CEQA Guidelines which states, in part, that: “The goal of conserving energy implies the wise and efficient use of energy. The means of achieving this goal include: (1) decreasing overall per capita energy consumption, (2) decreasing reliance on fossil fuels such as coal, natural gas, and oil; and (3) increasing reliance on *renewable energy* sources.”

5.2 THRESHOLDS OF SIGNIFICANCE

The determination of significance shall be made on a case-by-case basis and evaluated using the following thresholds of significance as specified below.

ENE-1 A project may have a significant impact if it would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation.

ENE-2 A project may have a significant impact if it would a) conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for *renewable energy* or energy efficiency and b) result in a significant adverse environmental effect due to that conflict.

5.3 IMPACT ANALYSIS

A project applicant must provide sufficient information to enable a determination of whether the project’s energy use could have a significant impact based on the thresholds identified in Section 5.2, which should also guide the development of *feasible* mitigation measures as needed. Guidance on addressing the questions from the Initial Study Checklist are provided below. Guidance on addressing the questions from the Initial Study Checklist is provided below. In order to determine whether project impacts exceed or meet the criteria of the thresholds of significance in Section 5.2, the level of impact shall be evaluated based on the appropriate assessment methodologies as outlined below.

(a) *Would the project result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources, during project construction or operation?*

Construction Energy Usage

The project applicant shall be responsible for evaluating the project’s construction energy consumption to demonstrate whether the project would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. Most construction-related energy consumption

would result from the operation of construction equipment and vehicle trips associated with commutes by construction workers and haul trucks supplying and removing materials.

Operational Energy Usage

The project applicant shall be responsible for evaluating the project's operational energy consumption to demonstrate whether the project would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. This shall be done by comparing anticipated energy consumption at build-out to project baseline conditions. Depending on the type of project, the total energy consumption or per capita consumption, or both, may be needed to demonstrate whether the project would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources. The applicant may consult a subject matter expert in coordination with the *Lead Agency* to determine the scope of analysis appropriate for the project to calculate total energy consumption and/or per capita consumption.

A determination that a building will meet or exceed the California Building Energy Efficiency Standards contained in the Building Code at title 24 of the California Code of Regulations, and any locally adopted amendments to the code, shall provide a presumption that the building's energy use impacts will not be significant.

Preparation of Checklist

The following information should be used to complete the Checklist:

A determination of **Less Than Significant Impact (LS)** shall be made if the project would not result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation.

A determination of **Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated (LS-M)** shall be made if the project would result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation. However, impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level by project redesign or other measures.

A determination of **Potentially Significant (PS)** shall be made and further analysis shall be addressed in an EIR if there is *substantial evidence* that the project has the potential to result in wasteful, inefficient, or unnecessary consumption of energy resources during construction or operation.

(b) Would the project 1) conflict with or obstruct a state or local plan for renewable energy or energy efficiency and 2) result in a significant adverse environmental effect due to that conflict?

The project shall be evaluated for consistency with the following state and/or local plans for *renewable energy* or energy efficiency:

Integrated Energy Policy Report

The California Energy Commission prepares the Integrated Energy Policy Report biannually, which contains policy recommendations to conserve resources, protect the environment, ensure reliable, secure, and diverse energy supplies, enhance the state's economy, and protect public health and safety. Reports can be accessed online.

California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program

The Renewables Portfolio Standard (RPS) is one of California's key programs for advancing *renewable energy*. The program sets continuously escalating *renewable energy* procurement requirements for the state's load-serving entities. The current RPS targets, revised in 2018 under Senate Bill 100, require that electric utilities provide 44 percent of retail sales from *renewable energy* sources by December 31, 2024, 50 percent by December 31, 2026, 52 percent by December 31, 2027, and 60 percent by December 31, 2030. SB 100 also introduced a requirement that 100 percent of retail sales of electricity come from zero-carbon energy sources by December 31, 2045.

Building Energy Efficiency Standards

The energy consumption of new residential and nonresidential buildings in California is regulated by the State's Title 24, Part 6, Building Energy Efficiency Standards, which serve to reduce wasteful, uneconomical, and unnecessary uses of energy for the state. They include requirements in the Energy Code (Title 24, Part 6) and voluntary energy efficiency provisions in CALGreen (Title 24, Part 11). The Building Energy Efficiency Standards are updated every three years and are enforced through incorporation into the Ventura County Building Code.

Ventura County General Plan

The General Plan contains several policies and programs that support energy conservation and efficiency consistent with state requirements. Refer to Section 6.7 (Energy Resource Conservation) of the Conservation and Open Space Element for goals and policies related to energy conservation and efficiency. Appendix B (Climate Change) includes a compilation of General Plan programs related to energy consumption, conservation, and efficiency.

Preparation of Checklist

The following information should be used to complete the Checklist:

A determination of **Less Than Significant Impact (LS)** shall be made if the project is consistent with all applicable plans and standards as stated above.

A determination of **Less Than Significant Impact with Mitigation Incorporated (LS-M)** shall be made if the project has the potential to result in significant impacts due to a conflict with the plans and standards as stated above. However, impacts can be reduced to a less than significant level by project redesign or other measures.

A determination of **Potentially Significant (PS)** shall be made and further analysis shall be addressed in an EIR if there is *substantial evidence* that the project has the potential to result in significant impacts due to a conflict with the plans and standards as stated above, and an EIR shall be prepared.

5.4 ENERGY ANALYSIS IN ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT REPORTS

Appendix F of the CEQA Guidelines states that, in order to ensure that energy implications are considered in project decisions, the potential energy implications of a project shall be considered in an EIR, to the extent relevant and applicable to the project. Appendix F further states that a project's energy consumption and proposed conservation measures may be addressed, as relevant and

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applicable, in the Project Description, Environmental Setting and Impact Analysis portions of technical sections, as well as through mitigation measures and alternatives.

To comply with this EIR requirement, the project applicant is responsible for conducting an energy analysis consistent with CEQA Guidelines Section 15126.2(b) to evaluate the project’s energy use for all project phases and components, including transportation-related energy, during construction and operation. This analysis may be included in related analyses of air quality, greenhouse gas emissions, transportation or utilities at the discretion of the *Lead Agency*. In addition to building code compliance, other relevant considerations should include, among others, the project’s size, location, orientation, equipment use and any *renewable energy* features that could be incorporated into the project.⁴ Pursuant to CEQA Guidelines section 15126.2(b), this analysis is subject to the rule of reason governing potential project alternatives as defined in CEQA Guidelines section 15126.6(f), and shall focus on energy use that is caused by the project.

As noted in Appendix F, a separate project-specific energy analysis may not be necessary in circumstances where an energy source serving the project has already undergone environmental review that adequately analyzed and mitigated the effects of the energy production.

5.5 RESOURCES & REFERENCES

Source	Managing Agency/Organization	Online Access
Resources		
Ventura County CEQA Implementation Manual	Ventura County Resource Management Agency (RMA) Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County Initial Study Assessment Guidelines: Introduction	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County Initial Study Checklist Template	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
References		
California Building Energy Efficiency Standards	California Energy Commission	Website
California Environmental Quality Act	California Governor’s Office of Land Use and Climate Innovation, formerly Office of Planning and Research	Website
California Renewables Portfolio Standard Program: emissions of greenhouse gases (SB 100)	California Energy Commission	Website
Integrated Energy Policy Report	California Energy Commission	Website
Renewables Portfolio Standards (RPS)	California Energy Commission	Website

⁴ See [League to Save Lake Tahoe Mountain Area Preservation Foundation v. County of Placer](#) (2022) 75 Cal.App.5th 63, 164, “an [Environmental Impact Report’s] analysis of a project’s impacts on energy resources must include a discussion of whether the project could increase its reliance on *renewable energy* sources to meet its energy demand as part of determining whether the project’s energy impacts are significant.”

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Source	Managing Agency/Organization	Online Access
Ventura County Building Code (2022)	Ventura County RMA Building and Safety Division	PDF Website
Ventura County General Plan, Appendix B, Climate Action Plan	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website
Ventura County General Plan, Conservation and Open Space Element	Ventura County RMA Planning Division	PDF Website