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Question of the Month: Did you know about the new legislation requiring buildings to cut greenhouse gas emissions? - by Paul Gurdak

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The Climate Mobilization Act – a package of bills representing an action plan for cutting greenhouse gas emissions across the five boroughs – states that buildings larger than 25,000 s/f must reduce their emissions by 40% by 2030 and by 80% by 2050.

What are greenhouse gas emissions anyway?

A greenhouse gas is any gaseous compound in the atmosphere that is capable of absorbing infrared radiation, thereby trapping and holding heat in the atmosphere. Energy consumption from electricity, heating, and cooling all contribute to greenhouse gas emissions.

Fun fact – did you know that 71% of greenhouse gas emissions in NYC come from its buildings?

Here are simple ways that buildings can lower their greenhouse gas emissions and meet the city's new goals:

- Replace complex building systems with high efficiency equipment;
- Switch to more energy efficient lighting;
- Adjust thermostats, or purchase a smart thermostat; and
- Purchasing more energy efficient appliances.

Additional savings can be found in building envelope upgrades and modernizations

When does the Climate

Mobilization Act take effect?

Starting in 2025, covered buildings will need to submit a report showing their carbon emissions in 2024.

What steps should building owners and managers take in order to comply?

Gather building information;
Make a plan;
Hire a licensed professional;
File a report; and
Confirm compliance.

Penalties and fines

Buildings will be assessed by reported emissions, and fines will be calculated by multiplying your emissions overages by \$268. Remember, failing to file a report comes with a hefty fine as well.

Worried about affordability?

Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) is a voluntary financing mechanism through the city that enables energy efficiency and renewable energy projects to receive long-term financing for little or no money down. With this program, more building owners will be able to make the alterations required to reduce greenhouse gas emissions citywide.

Exemptions

Exemptions under this bill include houses of worship, New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) and city-owned buildings.

Additional energy laws to consider

While it will take some time for this new bill to go into effect, here are some other energy laws that have already been enacted or will soon be in effect to consider when it comes to your building's energy emissions: Local Laws 84, 133, 87 and 33.

- Local Law 84 requires buildings larger than 50,000 s/f to report their building's energy usage to the City of New York on a yearly basis.
- Local Law 133 was signed into law in 2016 and expanded the list of buildings required to file benchmarking reports to include buildings 25,000 s/f and greater.
- Local Law 87: Buildings over 50,000 s/f must undergo periodic energy audits as part of the Greener, Greater Buildings Plan (GGBP). In addition to benchmarking annual energy and water consumption, retro-commissioning will give building owners a much more robust understanding of their buildings' performance, eventually shifting the market towards increasingly efficient, high-performing buildings.
- Local Law 33: Buildings over 25,000 s/f will be required to post Energy Grades on their buildings

by 2020. Energy Grades will be based on Energy Star Scores according to a specific breakdown.

As additional information is released, Merritt Engineering will be providing updates, so be sure to check our website, at www.merrittengineering.com. In the meantime, if you have any general questions regarding the Climate Mobilization Act, please feel free to contact us at (718) 767-0923.

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