

SVCE Permitting Modernization Program

Phase 1: Research Findings

- Many projects fail their first inspection due to discrepancies between plans and installed conditions = more staff time and delay.
- Many agencies require plan submittal and check for electrification measures and are concerned that removing this step and streamlining processes will put excessive responsibility on inspectors.
- Many agencies cited limitations on staff bandwidth as the primary barrier to implementing process changes or improvements.
- Several SVCE-member agencies have noise ordinances or other requirements that are reviewed for compliance outside of the building department = delays and miscommunication.

Phase 2: Outreach

With the findings from the research, SVCE met with agencies to offer resources for modernizing permitting processes. What we found was:

- Building Officials, for the most part, do not believe that permitting is broken. While others operating in the building decarbonization space commonly cite permitting as a major problem, those involved in permitting largely do not believe that it is a problem.
- The expected tsunami of permit applications resulting from regulations has not yet arrived and it is difficult to motivate people to act before a problem feels real.
- Some Building Officials are not supporters of regulations requiring retrofits – and this is understandable because they will often be the unpopular messenger to customers forced to electrify.

Phase 3: Implementation

We are now engaged with all member agencies with the following initiatives.



FOUNDATIONAL PRACTICES	ADVANCING PRACTICES	LEADING PRACTICES
Complete required practices* + choose 2 additional	Choose 3	Foundational + Advancing + Choose 2 from below
*Review EVI code, update if needed	Incorporate Mechanical Siting best practices	Minimize barriers to inspections (blindings, virtual inspections)
*Review New Construction Reach Code (if applicable) and make compliant with Berkeley decision	Require Bidirectional HVAC at time of AC installation or replacement	BAAQMD ramp up (includes electrification readiness) - particularly strategically requiring rewiring during remodels
Provide staff training for expedited permitting	Establish HPWH permitting equivalency	Require disclosures about gas appliances at time of sale
Develop pre-application support materials	Require electrification at 50 percent of remodel, if applicable (zero emissions threshold)	Implement Contractor Certification Program
Free permit pilot		Incentive-based remodels for electrification
Implement Permit Concierge		Discourage unnecessary service upgrades
Distribute outreach materials with each building permit about BAAQMD requirements, rewiring incentives, and appliance rebates.		Allow plumbing contractors to self-perform minor electrical work needed for HPWH installs
		Adopt real-time permitting for HPWHs

Resources

Service Optimization Resources – materials designed to assist building officials address the problem of unnecessary service upgrades



Mechanical Equipment Guidelines – a guide addressing the siting of heat pumps and other mechanical equipment for local agencies



Do any of these practices sound particularly promising for your jurisdiction?

Marin - currently looking into permit fee holiday

Contractor Certification Program, streamline permit applications for contractors with this certification?

Instant permits ✓
More inspector training ✓