



NYSERDA

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**Residential Energy Efficiency Contractor Guidance on
Phase 1 of Regional Reopening
May 28, 2020**

Dear Colleagues:

As part of our continued outreach with contractors performing work through NYSERDA programs, we would like to take this opportunity to provide you with guidance for resuming on-premise work through NYSERDA's residential energy efficiency programs in the regions of New York State that meet the conditions necessary for reopening in accordance with [NY Forward](#). First and foremost, our priority is for the safety of you, your staff and customers.

We recognize many of you have questions about returning to work, keeping your staff and customers safe, and ensuring your work remains in compliance with NYSERDA's program rules. As indicated in previous communications, Phase I of the state's reopening includes all construction activities. NYSERDA contractors, and sub-contractors, performing construction program activity must comply with all State, Federal or local rules and guidance, including attesting to the New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) [Interim Guidance for Construction Activities During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#) prior to commencing work on NYSERDA projects. It is important that your company complete the attestation requirement included in the Interim Guidance, by which you will certify and confirm that you and your employees will abide by proper precautions when returning to work as well as having the safety plans outlined in the guidance available on all work sites. These guidelines must be adhered to at all times for all companies participating in NYSERDA's programs. Other resources we encourage you to review prior to returning to work are the New York State Department of Health's [Advice for In-Home Contractors](#) and [Protecting Yourself and Your Family from Coronavirus](#). NYSERDA's [guidance](#) site will be continually updated, each contractor should familiarize themselves with it, and adhere to the material there & check back regularly for updates.

NYSERDA will continue to pay for program services completed by eligible contractors in accordance with all program rules and the Interim Guidance. To ensure a safe work environment, we stand ready to support contractors seeking assistance in developing a phased re-entry strategy by considering program flexibility where necessary and working with the industry to develop alternative protocols where possible.

General Guidance to Contractors Performing Work in Occupied Homes and Buildings

As contractors are assessing options for conducting work in occupied homes, NYSERDA is also actively considering program revisions to better protect the health and safety of technicians and customers. NYSERDA will be communicating the changes to program requirements in the coming weeks, as we receive and consider industry input and new light touch audit standards become available. In the meantime, the following general practices should be followed as you return to work in NYSERDA's residential energy efficiency programs:

1. **Suspend the use of blower doors in occupied buildings until further notice.** NYSERDA is working with ASHRAE and other industry experts to develop guidance for conducting blower door tests. Blower door tests should not be used in occupied buildings until that guidance becomes available. Where a program requirement calls for a blower door test during an assessment or test out, this requirement is suspended. When conducting assessments, in accordance with the Interim Guidance, worst case CAZ testing and combustion safety testing should continue under current program guidelines.
2. **Use remote energy audits, whenever possible.** NYSERDA will support the submission of energy audits completed remotely by paying the standard rate of \$150 per audit completed until further notice. Submission of a completed Comfort Home Assessment, Quick Audit Tool report or EmPCalc (for customers identified as eligible for LMI programs) along with an electronic signature from the customer acknowledging receipt of their energy audit report and utility release will be required to collect payment for remote audits completed. For-LMI projects, a contractor can perform a remote audit as a pre-assessment to begin to identify energy savings opportunities in the home, but will need to conduct a full field audit before submitting a work scope for EmPower NY or Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR incentives. Options for conducting remote audits for multifamily buildings are currently being assessed and will be communicated to market partners when available.
3. **Use low/no touch strategies wherever possible.** Examples may include, use of infrared to determine insulation and air leakage characteristics instead of cutting open cavities and using blower doors; use of satellite mapping and measurement tools such as Google Earth to collect building measurements; and using touchless reporting, contracting, and payment processes for customers. Contractors are encouraged to develop innovative solutions to meet this objective and where available, encourage customers to use NYSERDA's electronic release forms.
4. **Minimize time spent inside occupied spaces.** Conduct as much business as possible using remote methods with the customer before going to the site. Limit the number of crew members who access the interior of the home as much as possible. Reduce the number of rooms entered and surfaces touched inside the home to the minimum necessary to complete the work. In multifamily buildings, visit less-frequented mechanical rooms and common areas, and if conducting in-unit inspections, visit vacant units. Conduct in-person conversations with customers at a distance of at least 6' and outdoors whenever possible.

Program-Specific Guidance for Resuming Program Activities

In addition to the general guidance provided above, the following guidance is being provided as you prepare to complete projects that were put on hold or begin new projects:

EmPower New York, Assisted Home Performance with ENERGY STAR, and Home Performance with ENERGY STAR

- NYSERDA will be contacting you within the next week to get an update on your preparations for resuming work.
- As your company prepares to begin work, we want to remind you that the expiration date on all open projects have been extended and that you should begin to contact your customers to begin work as soon as you are able to comply with the Interim Guidance and are ready to begin work.
- You can begin work on any project submission that has been approved, for project submissions that have not been approved and the customer is ready to proceed with the work, please contact your account manager to expedite reviews.
- NYSERDA will be communicating with customers of projects that were placed on hold during the pause of on-premise work to let them know that work can now proceed and outline safe work practice expectations. NYSERDA will also provide you with a copy of the letter so that you can share a copy with the customer, if necessary, and a copy of the letter will be posted on the Contractor Support site at

- For projects that received partial payment, NYSERDA will contact you to understand the status of the project and any outstanding work and will provide guidance on closing out the project.

Home Energy Ratings (HER)

- NYSERDA will be coordinating with home energy rating partners regarding Pearl Certification and Home Energy Score data collection procedures. In the meantime, follow the general guidelines described above and in the Interim Guidance document.

Residential Energy Audits (REA)

- The REA Program will continue to waive the requirement to submit a "wet signature" Customer Attestation Form. Instead, participating auditors must submit an electronically completed Customer Attestation Form in order to collect payment for remote audits. The electronically completed Customer Attestation Form can be in the form of a scan, photograph, or e-mail where the image clearly shows the customer's signature. If your customer does not have the ability to provide the form in an electronic format, then please contact the REA program staff for alternative submittal options. Electronic signatures will soon be enabled for these forms at which time, the program will shift entirely to electronic signature collection.
- Consistent with NYSERDA's general guidance above, contractors are urged to develop and implement strategies that enable the completion of energy audits while minimizing or even eliminating the need for an on-site visit. Contractors who are interested in implementing remote energy audits should contact the REA Program Manager.

Comfort Home (CH)

- Participating contractors are to follow the general guidelines described above and in the Interim Guidance document. The software option to choose estimated air leakage should be used at time of assessment rather than completing blower door testing. At time of installation, contractor may submit an installed project without completing the blower door test as normally required by the Program.

Multifamily Performance Program (MPP)

- As your company prepares to resume onsite work, we want to remind you that the deliverables due date on all open projects will be extended as needed and recently issued temporary changes to the program [guidelines](#) will remain in effect through December 2020. Consistent with NYSERDA's general guidance above and the Interim Guidance document, contractors are urged to develop and implement strategies that minimize work conducted in occupied dwelling units and enable the completion of energy audits and post construction inspections while minimizing or even eliminating the need for an on-site visit, for example by working with building staff already on site to obtain photos and documentation of onsite conditions.

As we work with our contractors and industry partners to develop new approaches and procedures over the coming weeks, we encourage you to be creative in developing your own solutions and sharing your best ideas to follow the Governor's charge to "reimagine the workplace." When this public health emergency is over, we may not return to the same way we worked before. Instead, we will use this crisis to emerge stronger, smarter, and "build back better" and we will need your help to get there.

In the coming weeks, look for additional assistance from NYSERDA including:

1. Implementation of a fully electronic process for reporting and capture of customer signatures across all residential programs.
2. Development of modified and updated energy audit procedures for both single family and multifamily energy audits to incorporate remote and low/no touch processes in a standard set of processes.
3. Posting of a new **Remote Audit Challenge** opportunity to receive development grants supporting implementation and testing of remote and virtual audit tools.

If you have any questions, please contact your designated program representative, or email us at support.residential@nyserda.ny.gov and we will forward questions to the appropriate NYSERDA staff member for follow-up.

Thank you for your continued partnership and we look forward to working with you as you begin to resume program activity.