

Energy-efficiency goals adopted by state panel

David R. Baker

Thursday, December 6, 2007

California should make all new homes so energy-efficient by 2020 that they won't need to draw power from the state's electrical grid, according to a plan for meeting the state's future energy needs.

Adopted unanimously Wednesday by the California Energy Commission, the plan contains dozens of recommendations that touch on almost every way California generates and uses energy. They are designed both to lower the state's energy use and to cut the greenhouse gas emissions that come from burning fossil fuels.

None of the recommendations is binding, but several spell out future actions that state regulators or the legislature may take.

The concept of high-efficiency homes, for example, will become one of the energy commission's long-term goals, said commission Chairwoman Jackalynne Pfannenstiel. The commission already sets energy-efficiency standards for buildings and will probably ratchet those up as more-efficient lighting and building materials come on the market, she said.

Combined with small, local power generators, such as solar panels or fuel cells, new homes built after 2020 would not need to rely on power from the state's electricity grid. The plan calls for applying the same standard to commercial buildings by 2030.

Other parts of the plan recommend ways to increase the amount of renewable power used in the state. The plan suggests, for example, using a price-setting system called a "feed-in tariff" that has worked in Europe.

Feed-in tariffs, in general, create fixed, long-term prices for electricity purchased from renewable sources such as wind farms or large solar installations. That helps secure financing for the companies that want to build renewable projects.

"The renewable developer then goes to the financial community and says, 'I can bring in revenue for 10 years at this level,' " Pfannenstiel said. "The threshold question is, does it make sense in California?"

The Integrated Energy Policy Report is online at www.energy.ca.gov.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2007/12/06/BUGI5TP966.DTL>

This article appeared on page C - 2 of the San Francisco Chronicle

San Francisco Chronicle Sections

Go

© 2007 Hearst Communications Inc. | [Privacy Policy](#) | [Feedback](#) | [RSS Feeds](#) | [FAQ](#) | [Site Index](#) | [Contact](#)