

If your community adopts the Stretch Code, a certified Home Energy Rater must conduct a Home Energy Rating (HERS) for all new homes permitted after the implementation of the Stretch Code. A HERS Index of 65 will be required for homes 3,000 square feet or greater, and an Index of 70 for smaller homes. HERS ratings can be performed on additions and remodeled homes, but will not be required for code compliance.

1. What is the role of HERS raters in stretch code towns?

A certified Home Energy Rating System (HERS) Rater is responsible for:

- Completing a pre-construction home energy rating based on plans to estimate a preliminary HERS Index for the house
- Conducting a mid-construction inspection and a final inspection of the energy efficiency features of the home including
 - a. Grading insulation and checking for completeness
 - b. Verifying compliance with the Thermal Bypass Checklist (TBC)
 - c. Identifying any changes to energy features to update HERS rating and index
 - d. Performing blower door testing, and testing duct leakage (if applicable)
- Providing the builder with documentation of the final HERS Index, compliance with the TBC, blower door test results and duct blaster test results.

2. When should a builder hire a HERS rater?

Builders should contract with a HERS rater before applying for a building permit. This allows the builder to get feedback on the energy efficiency of their building plans and specifications. A preliminary HERS Index report is needed to get a building permit.

3. Who is qualified to do a Home Energy Rating and create a HERS index?

Only certified Home Energy Raters working under the quality assurance oversight of an accredited HERS provider is eligible to generate a HERS index. Certification is a rigorous process that requires training, testing, ongoing quality assurance oversight and continuing professional education. The Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET) sets the rules for certification and accredits all HERS providers nationally.

If you are unsure if your rater is certified, call their HERS provider to confirm their qualifications. The National RESNET Provider Directory can be found here: http://resnet.us/programs/search_directory

4. What are the fees for HERS inspections, and how will cost be computed?

Like any subcontractor, CET sets its fees according to the specifications of the job, for instance, size of home, number of heating systems, etc. For a typical new construction, single family house pursuing a HERS rating in 2010, CET charges a total of \$950 for a preliminary HERS analysis, technical support, feedback about reaching the desired HERS index, two site inspections, and the final HERS rating. Homes that are larger, modular, multi-family, or are part of a larger subdivision, may have a higher or lower fee.

When a typical home enrolls in the ENERGY STAR program in 2010, CET is charging a \$300 analysis fee and waiving the rest of our fees because we are reimbursed from the Massachusetts New Homes with ENERGY STAR program upon completion of our inspections. In Stretch Code towns, it makes sense for builders to enroll in the ENERGY STAR Homes program to receive technical assistance for code compliance, reduced inspection fees, possible utility incentives, and to achieve the marketing advantage of ENERGY STAR Homes labeling.

To inquire about diagnostic testing or a HERS rating and available utility incentives, contact Megan McDonough at CET for a fee proposal (413-586-7350 x221 / meganm@cetonline.org).

5. What is The Center for Ecological Technology?

The Center for Ecological Technology (CET) is a local non-profit organization with over 30 years experience advising people about energy efficiency for their homes. As a HERS Provider, CET has several HERS raters on our staff with many years of collective experience to provide you with reliable and accurate rating services.

6. Who will pay the HERS rating & inspection fee?

Whoever hires CET to perform the analysis and inspections pays the fee, typically the general contractor.

7. What building measures will help my house meet the stretch code?

A HERS Index is a performance based metric that allows for trade offs between different building components to meet the overall energy efficiency goals for the building. RES/Check is another example of a performance based approach to estimating the energy efficiency of a building. To calculate a HERS index, information about the size of the home, the insulation and tightness of a home, the windows, the efficiency level of the heating, cooling, and domestic hot water systems, the ventilation system, lights and appliances, renewable energy systems and building orientation are entered into the rating software.

8. How can I make sure my completed project reaches a HERS Index of 65 or 70?

CET has experience providing technical support to participating ENERGY STAR Homes clients to create the greatest likelihood that the home will achieve certification upon completion. The Stretch Code requires a specific HERS index of 65 or 70, and like other code requirements, a Certificate of Occupancy is dependent on reaching the appropriate HERS index.

In order to provide a little wiggle room for achieving the desired index at the final inspection, during the planning phase CET will work with the builder to target a slightly better index than what the Stretch Code requires. To ensure the builder has sufficient guidance from the HERS rater, it's important that they contract with CET early in the construction process. However, ultimately the builder is responsible for understanding the requirements.

9. Is there an appeal process if a builder disagrees with the HERS Index or inspections?

All certified Home Energy Raters work under the quality assurance oversight of a HERS Provider organization accredited through the Residential Energy Services Network (RESNET). The provider ensures that their HERS raters use solid protocols, are performing quality work through periodic quality assurance checks, receive continuing education, and resolving disputes about the raters work.

CET is a non-profit, accredited HERS provider organization and has certified almost 1,000 ENERGY STAR Homes since 2003. If a disagreement arose about the rating score, compliance with the Thermal Bypass Checklist, or diagnostic test readings, we would ask that clients first seek to resolve technical questions with their Rater or with the program manager Megan McDonough.

If the client has any complaints about the quality of CET's work during this process, they can contact Mark Newey, CET's Director of Energy Programs and HERS Quality Assurance Designee. If the client still had concerns about how CET is resolving the issue, a complaint can be made to RESNET. www.resnet.us.

Massachusetts New Homes with ENERGY STAR: 800-628-8413 / www.energystarhomes.com