

CALIFORNIA'S UPDATED PARTICLE POLLUTION REGULATIONS

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Particle Pollution presents a severe public health risk. Exposure to particulate matter (PM) leads to a host of respiratory and cardiovascular problems. Though the United States has achieved a great deal of progress in reducing the amount of ambient air pollution in the last thirty years, many areas throughout the country still wrestle with particle pollution levels that put populations at risk. California recently enacted regulations to address exposure to particle pollution inside of homes and other buildings. Health risks associated with particle pollution occur when particles from outdoor air enter through improperly sealed building ventilation. California homes or other buildings permitted on or after January 1, 2020, must comply with high-efficiency air-filtration regulations.

Reducing Exposure to Particle Pollution

Although particulate pollution originates with outdoor sources (e.g. from vehicles or factories, etc.), the majority of exposure to PM occurs indoors. This is because we spend most of our time indoors, inside of buildings. Particulates inside of outdoor air enter buildings through gaps in the building “envelope” or ventilation system. A report by the [Environmental Law Institute](#) called [Reducing Indoor Exposure to Particle Pollution From Outdoor Sources: Policies and Programs to Improve Air Quality in Homes](#) explains California's new regulations at length.

Communities hoping to reduce their own exposure to particulate matter have an opportunity to adopt standards similar to California's the next time they go through a building code revision process. These hypothetical building code revisions might only apply to new housing construction and/or renovations. However, proposals for policies for government-funded constructions, such as school or affordable-housing projects, might also be made. Nevertheless, newly built and renovated homes account for only part of the housing in the United States. Strategies must be developed to address the extant housing stock that falls outside these regulatory headings.