Heat Pump Water Heater Permitting and Inspection Checklist



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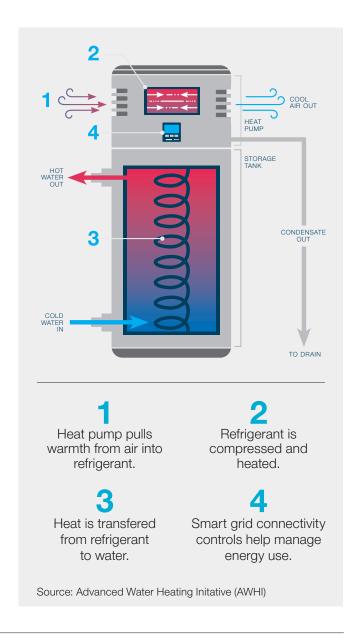
This document was reviewed by a number of organizations that will receive proper attribution here once the document is finalized.

Introduction

Heat pump water heaters (HPWHs) use electricity to move heat from one place to another rather than generating their own heat. This makes them three times more efficient than other water heaters, according to the Department of Energy. The installation and operation of residential HPWHs throughout the country is a key strategy for increasing building energy efficiency, electrifying building energy loads and reducing greenhouse gas emissions in support of climate goals. Installation of HPWHs requires special considerations that are not applicable to traditional electric-resistance water heaters.

The two major markets for HPWHs are single-family and multifamily residences, with over 118 million water heaters currently installed. More than 25 million of these systems are over 10 years old and will need to be replaced in the next five years, providing an opportunity to reduce the carbon footprint of water heating substantially.² In August 2022, President Biden signed the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) into law, marking the most significant action Congress has taken on clean energy and climate change in the nation's history. The Inflation Reduction Act offers, among other things, incentives that support the transition to all-electric homes. The purpose of this guide is to provide recommendations to streamline the permitting process for local jurisdictions and provide solutions for the challenges associated with the installation of unitary heat pump water heaters. By providing a specific and replicable list of permitting requirements, local jurisdictions can reduce informational barriers and ensure the design and installation of residential HPWHs are consistent and code-compliant.

This permitting and inspection checklist references the most applicable requirements from the 2020 National Electrical Code (NEC), 2021 International Residential Code (IRC), 2021 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), 2021 International Building Code (IBC), and 2021 International Plumbing Code (IPC) as they apply to air source heat pump installations in residential buildings. Although not all requirements are covered by these checklists, they do include the most important life and safety requirements of the installation and can be used to highlight "common mistakes" made by installers. While these guidelines are geared primarily toward implementing the 2020 NEC and 2021 I-codes, jurisdictions enforcing and contractors using earlier editions of these codes can make use of these guidelines.



¹ https://www.energy.gov/energysaver/heat-pump-water-heaters

² https://www.advancedwaterheatinginitiative.org/about-heat-pump-water-heaters

How to Use this Guide

The building department may conduct plan review and inspection for residential HPWH installations using this guide as a starting point. Designers, contractors, and building owners can use this guide to know what to expect during the permitting and inspection processes. Each project and jurisdiction is unique and additional requirements may need to be enforced as deemed appropriate.

This guide was designed with limitations on its scope and applicability in mind, including:

- This permitting guide only addresses unitary HPWH applications and does not address any other applications at this time.
- This permitting guide does not include any service upgrades or other electrical work. If the electrical load calculations demonstrate a service upgrade is needed, this permitting and inspection guide cannot be used to determine compliance with code requirements for a service upgrade.
- This permitting guide does not include any structural upgrades that may be needed for relocation of a water heater or for an increase in water heater capacity. If relocation requires structural upgrades, this guide cannot be used to determine compliance with code requirements for those upgrades.
- This permitting guide is for water heaters utilized for supplying potable hot water only and cannot be used to determine compliance with code for systems that provide hot water for space heating purposes.
- This permitting guide is for domestic and service hot water only and cannot be used to determine compliance with code for systems that provide hot water for pools and spas.
- This recommended process is for a 3-in-1 model (mechanical, electrical, and plumbing) that charges a flat rate for up to three items. This is to make the process more uniform and create a universal and simpler format for permitting projects.

Preparation Considerations

Space & Location Requirements:

- Heat pump water heaters take up more space than a conventional gas water heater—450 cubic feet or more with 6 inch clearance above and around is usually recommended for adequate airflow.
- Heat pump water heaters are typically installed in a garage, basement, indoor-outdoor closet, or attic so that they are in the semi-conditioned or conditioned areas with minimum ventilation requirements.
- Heat pump water heaters will cool and dehumidify the space it is in. Venting cold air outdoors or into another part of the home can be an option with many models.
- The system produces water that needs a small water pipe routed outside or to a drain or sink.
- The unit size should be factored into location selection to ensure easy access for future servicing.
- The system should be centrally located to reduce piping length and speed hot water delivery.

Sound Considerations:

 Heat pump water heaters have a fan and compressor, both of which make a modest amount of noise.

Permit Submission Requirements

To apply for a permit, submit the following:

- 1. Combination permit application (electrical, mechanical, and plumbing)
- 2. HPWH type, size, and efficiency
- 3. Floor plan drawn to scale showing:
 - a. Labeled location of existing water heater, if applicable
 - b. Labeled proposed location of new HPWH
 - c. Labeled location of electric panel(s)
- 4. Electrical line diagram including (required if electrical service to water heater needs to be upgraded from 120V to 240V or if water heater is being relocated):
 - a. Wiring methods and design
 - b. Connections
 - c. Grounding
 - d. Installation specifications

- 5. Mechanical and plumbing piping design including: (Note: retrofit requirements may vary)
 - Heat traps on service water heating inlet and outlet lines
 - b. Installation specifications
 - c. Locations, sizes, and installation specifications for ductwork exhaust and intake air, including insulation and sealing
 - d. Condensate drain line installation specifications (depending on location, some systems could require a condensate pump)
 - e. Equipment and system controls
- 6. Completed electrical load calculations
- Equipment manufacturer specifications and installation manual(s)

Permitting and Inspection Checklist

Plan Inspection Minimum Installation and Labeling Requirements 1. HPWH is installed according to manufacturer's installation instructions. (IPC 502.1) (IRC M2005.1) 2. HPWH is suitable for the environment in which it will be installed. (IRC M1305 and IRC P2801.4) HPWH is third-party certified. (IPC 501.5) 4. HPWHs and storage tanks have the maximum allowable working pressure permanently attached and clearly stamped in the metal or marked on a plate. (IPC 501.7) 5. HPWHs have a nameplate with identifying name and rating in volts and amperes or in volts and watts. (NEC 422.60) HPWHs complies with UL 174. (IRC M2005.1) HPWH meets capacity and efficiency ratings in plans. If the HPWH is replacing a gas water heater, the gas outlets are capped gastight. (IFGC 404.15) **Location Requirements** 9. HPWH clearances meet the industry standard of 7 X 7 X 3 or as specified in the manufacturer's installation specification and listing. (Manufacturer recommendation) 10. HPWH is installed according to manufacturer instructions. (IRC M2005.1) The HPWH has unrestricted airflow and minimum installation space of 450 cubic feet with 6"

- clearance above (depending on size of system). (Manufacturer recommendation)
- b. Where a HPWH is installed in a closet or utility room, there is adequate thermal air circulation means or thermal venting of cooled air (ducts or vented doors or door edges trimmed up). (Manufacturer recommendation)
- The HPWH is installed where the ambient air temperature is between within specified operating conditions. (Manufacturer recommendation)



		Plan	Inspection			
16.	Where earthquake loads are applicable:					
	a. HPWH supports are designed and installed for the seismic forces according to the International Building Code. (IPC 502.4)					
	b. In Seismic Design Categories D ₀ , D ₁ , D ₂ and townhouses in Seismic Design Category C, HPWH is anchored or strapped in the upper one-third and in the lower one-third of the appliance to resist a horizontal force equal to one-third of the operating weight of the water heater, acting in any horizontal direction, or according to the appliance manufacturer's recommendations. (IRC P2801.8)					
17.	If the HPWH is relocated, the new length of hot water piping from the HPWH to fixtures that require hot water must not exceed 50 feet. (IPC 607.2)					
18.	HPWH is located to provide protection between the HPWH and adjacent combustible materials. (NEC 422.17)					
19.	If installed in a garage, HPWH is protected from vehicular impact. (NEC 110.27(b))					
20.	HPWH installation location matches approved floor plan.					
	Electrical Requirements Panel Capacity					
21.	For HPWH installations, the electrical service rating is greater than or equal to the electrical service load as demonstrated by electrical service load calculations. (NEC 220)					
22.	The HPWH branch circuit is properly identified on the electrical panelboard. (NEC 408.4)					
Wa	iter Heater					
23.	The rating of the branch circuit serving the water heater is not less than either (NEC 422.10A, NEC 422.13):					
	a. 125% of the marked rating on the water heater					
	b. The marked rating on the water heater where the branch circuit device and its assembly are listed for continuous loading					
24.	Appropriately sized overcurrent protection (e.g., circuit breaker) is provided for the branch circuit serving the HPWH. (NEC 240.4)					

		Plan	Inspection				
25.	The branch circuit overcurrent device may serve as the disconnecting means where the switch or circuit breaker is within sight from the appliance or be capable of being locked in the open position. (NEC 422.31)	0					
26.	A means for disconnecting an electric hot water supply system from its energy supply is provided according to NFPA 70. A separate valve shall be provided to shut off the energy fuel supply to all other types of hot water supply systems. (IPC 504.3)	0					
27.	All 125-volt through 250-volt receptacles supplied by single-phase branch circuits rated 150 volts or less to ground have ground-fault circuit interrupter (GFCI) protection if HPWH is installed outdoors, in crawlspaces or basements, or in indoor damp and wet locations such as in laundry rooms or in bathrooms. (NEC 210.8)		٥				
PI	Plumbing Requirements						
Wa	ter Heater						
28.	The method of connecting a circulating water heater to the tank provides proper circulation of water through the water heater. The pipe or tubes required for the installation of appliances that will draw from the water heater or storage tank comply with the provisions for material and installation. (IPC 503.2)						
Sy	stem						
29.	All piping is properly installed, sealed, and protected from exposed elements. (IRC M2101, IPC Chapter 6)						
30.	30. The cold water branch line from the main water supply line to the HPWH is provided with a valve located near the equipment and serving only the hot water storage tank or water heater. The valve does not interfere or cause a disruption of the cold water supply to the remainder of the cold water system. The valve is provided with access on the same floor level as the water heater served. (IPC 503.1)		٥				
31.	31. Hot water supply systems are equipped with automatic temperature controls capable of adjustments from the lowest to highest acceptable temperature settings for the intended temperature operating range. (IPC 501.8)		٥				
32.	The HPWH is protected by one of the following two relief valve types which have a minimum rated capacity for the HPWH, conform to ANSI Z21.22, and meet discharge pipe requirements: (IRC P2804.1, IRC P2804.2, IRC P2804.6.1)		٥				
	a. A separate pressure-relief valve and a separate temperature-relief valve						
	b. A combination pressure- and temperature relief valve.						

			Plan	Inspection
33.	3. The following hot water piping applications are insulated with a minimum R-3: (IECC R403.5.2)			
	a.	Piping ¾ inch (19.1 millimeters) and larger in nominal diameter.		
	b.	Piping located outside the conditioned space.		
	C.	Piping from the water heater to distribution manifold.		
	d.	Piping located under a floor slab.		
	e.	Buried piping.		
	f.	Supply and return piping in recirculation systems other than demand recirculation systems.		
34.	Со	nnections are inspected for leaks or drips.		
	hau		П	П
35.	Dir	ect exhaust away from any thermostats if present or within ten feet. (best practice)		
_		haust openings that terminate outdoors are protected with corrosion-resistant		
	scr	reens, louvers or grilles. Openings in screens, louvers and grilles are not less an ¼ inch and not larger than ½ inch. (IRC R303.6)		
Со	nde	ensate		
37.	out abo	ndensate from cooling coils and evaporators is drained from the drain pan tlet to an appropriate place of disposal (e.g., not a street, walkway, crawl space, ove outdoor equipment, or other area where it would cause a nuisance). The ndensate drain piping slopes downhill with a minimum 1-percent slope (1/8 unit tical in 12 units horizontal). (IPC 314.2.1)		٥
38.	pip floo lau to a fixt	ndensate drains are not directly connected to any plumbing drain, waste or vent be. Condensate drains are not discharged into a plumbing fixture other than a bor sink, floor drain, trench drain, mop sink, hub drain, standpipe, utility sink or ndry sink. Condensate drain connections to a lavatory wye branch tailpiece or a bathtub overflow pipe is not to be considered as discharging to a plumbing ure. Except where discharging to grade outdoors, the point of discharge of indensate drains is located within the same occupancy, tenant space or dwelling that the source of the condensate. (IPC 314.2.1)		

39.	9. Components of the condensate disposal system are ABS, cast iron, copper and copper alloy, CPVC, cross-linked polyethylene, galvanized steel, PE-RT, polyethylene, polypropylene, PVC or PVDF pipe or tubing. Components are selected for the pressure and temperature rating of the installation. Joints and connections are made according to the applicable provisions of Chapter 7 of the International Plumbing Code relative to the material type. Condensate waste and drain line size are not less than ¾-inch pipe size and do not decrease in size from the drain pan connection to the place of condensate disposal. Where the drain pipes from more than one unit are manifolded together for condensate drainage, the pipes or tubing are sized according to Table 314.2.2. (IPC 314.2.2)				
40.	coi fror	l who	ndary drain or auxiliary drain pan is installed for each cooling or evaporator ere damage to any building components will occur as a result of overflow e equipment drain pan or stoppage in the condensate drain piping.		
	a. The secondary condensate drain piping is not less than ¾-inch pipe sizing and maintains a minimum horizontal slope in the direction of discharge of not less than ½ unit vertical in 12 units horizontal (1 percent slope). (IMC 307.2.1)				
	b.		e secondary drain or auxiliary drain pan uses one of the following methods: C 314.2.3)		
		i.	An auxiliary drain pan with a separate drain installed under the coils on which condensation will occur. The auxiliary pan drain discharges to a conspicuous point of disposal so that occupants are aware of a stoppage of the primary drain. The pan is at least 1.5 inches deep, is at least 3 inches larger than the unit or the coil dimensions in width and length, and is constructed of corrosion-resistant material.		
		ii.	A separate overflow drain line connected to the drain pan installed with the equipment. This overflow drain discharges to a conspicuous point of disposal to alert occupants in the event of a stoppage of the primary drain. The overflow drain line connects to the drain pan at a higher level than the primary drain connection.		
		iii.	An auxiliary drain pan without a separate drain line installed under the coils on which condensation will occur. This pan is equipped with a water level detection device conforming to UL 508 that will shut off the equipment served prior to overflow of the pan. The pan is equipped with a fitting to allow for drainage. The auxiliary drain pan is constructed according to section i.		
		iv.	A water-level detection device conforming to UL 508 is installed that will shut off the equipment served in the event that the primary drain is blocked. The device is installed in the primary drain line, the overflow drain line or the equipment-supplied drain pan, located at a point higher than the primary drain line connection and below the overflow rim of such pan.		
	C.	pro dev the	down-flow units and other coils that do not have secondary drains or visions to install a secondary or auxiliary drain pan, a water-level monitoring rice is installed inside the primary drain pan. This device shuts off equipment served in the event that the primary drain becomes restricted. vices are not installed in the drain line. (RC M1411.3.1.1)		

Resources

NFPA 70: National Electrical Code 2020

2021 International Fuel Gas Code (IFGC)

2021 International Plumbing Code (IPC)

2021 International Residential Code (IRC)

Example Agency Contacts

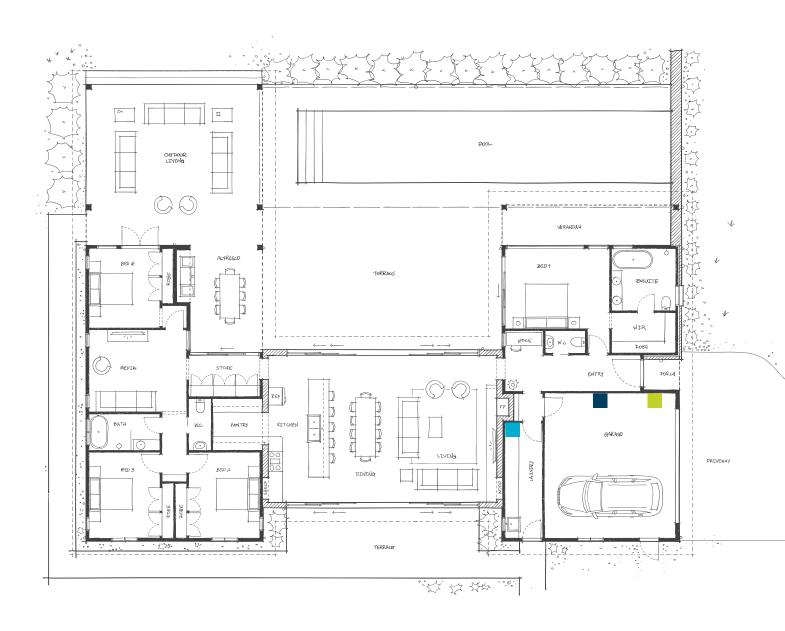
Agency		
Division		
Contact		
Email		
Phone		

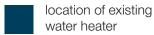
Appendix: Example Permit Application

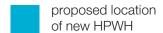
☐ New Application ☐ Revised	Application	
SECTION 1: General Info		
Project Address	()	
Property Owner's Name	Phone Number	E-mail
Property Owner's Mailing Address (if	different from Project Address)	
SECTION 2: Project Details		
☐ Single-Family ☐ Multi-far	mily Other:	
Project Scope:		
Make & Model #:	Gallons S	Storage:
Model Volts and Ampacity:		Energy Factor:
Tank Size:	NEEA Tie	er:
Location: In conditioned space	Venting origin and destination	n: Dimensions of room or closet:
In conditioned space with ventingGarage or basement		
☐ Attic		
Installed in the location of the existing	g tanked water heater:	Yes □ No
SECTION 3: Contractor Information	on	
Business Address	() -	
Contractor Contact Name	Phone Number	E-mail
Contractor Business Name	Contracto	or License Number

Electrician/Subcontractor Business Name	Electrician/Subcontractor License Number			
Business Address				
Electrician/Subcontractor Contact Name Phone Number	r E-mail			
SECTION 4: Permit Fee				
[Include fee schedule/options and/or instructions for calculating	ng fee, directions on how and when to submit the permit fee.]			
SECTION 5: Important Notice				
A permit must be obtained for all installations or alterations of to Permitting Checklist for additional documents required. Fa approval. All permits expire six (6) months after date of issua this six-month period renders the permit invalid and a new p progress must continue until completion. All work must be of	ailure to provide all required documents, will delay permit ance. Failure to start the work authorized by a permit within permit must be obtained. Once work begins, noticeable			
Please submit the following additional documents	Submit Permit Application			
with the HPWH Permit Application Site Plan or Floor Plan Electrical Load Calculations Structural Load Calculations (if required) Equipment Manufacturer Specifications Energy Compliance Forms Additional Document—edit or delete as necessary] SECTION 6: Applicant Signature	[Describe the submission process, how should the permits be submitted? In-person, on-line, e-mail, fax, etc.]			
I, the undersigned, certify that I have proper authority to apply for this permit, that the Contractor has obtained a signed contract from the Property Owner for the specified work, that all contractors have consented to being listed, and that all the information contained on this application is true and accurate to the best of my knowledge.				
Name	Title			
Signature	Date			
For Office Use Only				
Application Number:	Date Applied:			
Permit Number:	Date Issued:			
Issued By:				

Appendix: Example Site or Floor Plan



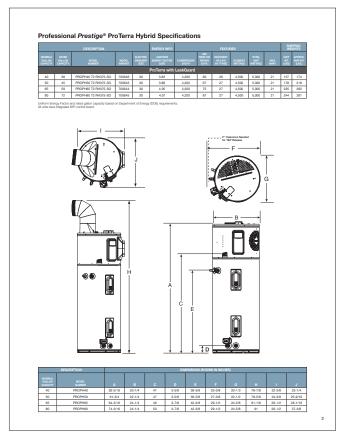


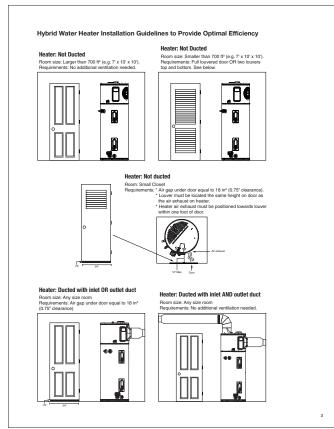


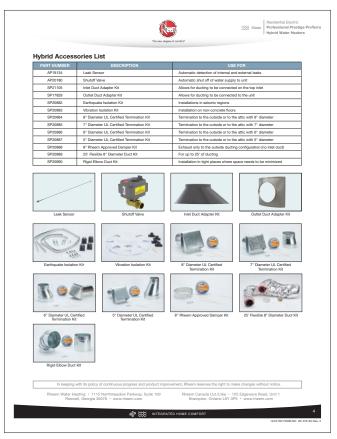


Appendix: Example Equipment Manufacturer Specifications









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