

BC Energy Step Code

Brand Handbook

VOLUME 2 OF 2

Style and Brand Usage Guidelines

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Style

As the BC Energy Step Code is still a relatively new standard and regulation, stakeholders are still learning what it is and how it works. For this reason, we encourage those referencing it in presentations, documents, articles, and elsewhere use consistent language, style, and terminology.

Standard versus regulation

“The standard” describes the various bundles of technical requirements that a builder must meet to demonstrate compliance with a given step of the BC Energy Step Code. In contrast, “the regulation” describes the amendments to the *Building Act* and the *British Columbia Building Code* that provide the legal authority to enforce the standard.

Referencing the standard

Reference the standard using its full name, the BC Energy Step Code: always capitalize, but do not capitalize “the” and do not use periods in “BC”. A trademark symbol is neither expected nor required. Do not italicize, as it is not a statute. Secondary references in documents may reference the BC Energy Step Code as “the regulation” or “the standard.” We use both in this document interchangeably. After first use, “Step Code” (always capitalize) and “ESC” (no periods) are both also acceptable shortened forms.

The regulation’s name is misleading; the BC Energy Step Code is not actually a standalone or replacement code, but a part of the *BC Building Code*. It is a regulation that offers an alternate performance-based pathway to meeting the code’s prescriptive requirements. Because audiences may incorrectly conclude that the BC Energy Step Code replaces the *BC Building Code* outright, do not reference it as “the code.”

Referencing specific steps

Cite individual steps as Step 1, Step 2, and so on; capitalize, and use the numeral. When referring to groupings of lower and upper steps, capitalize as in: “Upper Steps,” “Upper Step,” and “Lower Steps.” When referring to a step generically, use lower case, as in the example below.

Local governments may “adopt” the BC Energy Step Code or “reference” it, either in bylaw, policy or through incentive programs. It is acceptable to say a given community is “adopting the standard” or “adopting the Step Code” or is “referencing the Step Code.”

Usage examples

Because there are varying numbers of steps associated with each section of the *BC Building Code*, it is important to reference both the relevant section of the code and the performance level.

Reference the building code section first and the step second, as in these examples:

- Photo caption: “North Park Passive House in Victoria, BC (Part 9, Step 5).”
- “This building under construction in the Township of Langley will reach a performance level equal to Part 9, Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code.”
- “We designed and built this project to comply with the requirements of Part 3, Step 2 of the BC Energy Step Code.”
- “We’re offering this incentive to any builder or developer who meets a level of energy performance that complies with the Upper Step of the BC Energy Step Code for high rises (Part 3, Step 4).”
- “In the coming year, the city intends to reference the BC Energy Step Code in its building bylaws.”
- “A local government may reference one or more steps in its building bylaws.”

Standard Definitions

Please use the following short explanations to introduce and define the regulation in reports and printed materials. We also offer a shorter description in space-constrained contexts.

The BC Energy Step Code (≈110 words)

“The BC Energy Step Code is a provincial regulation that local governments may use, if they wish, to incentivize or require a level of energy efficiency in new construction that goes above and beyond the requirements of the *BC Building Code*. It consists of a series of steps, representing increasing levels of energy-efficiency performance. By gradually adopting one or more steps of the standard, local governments can increase building performance requirements in their communities. The Province of British Columbia has set a goal that all new buildings must reach a net-zero energy ready level of efficiency by 2032; the BC Energy Step Code serves as the policy pathway to reach that goal.”

The BC Energy Step Code (≈30 words)

“The BC Energy Step Code is an energy-efficiency performance standard designed to help the province meet its goal that all new British Columbia buildings must be net-zero energy ready by 2032.”

The Energy Step Code Council (≈50 words)

“The Energy Step Code Council is a cross-sector body that monitors implementation of the standard while serving as a bridge between the province, local governments, utilities, and industry. It identifies emergent impacts or issues, and works to resolve them. The council also establishes best practices, and makes resources available to ensure local governments employ the standard responsibly.”

The BC Energy Step Code is the policy pathway that will allow the province to deliver on its commitment that all new construction in the province must, by 2032, reach a “net-zero-energy energy ready” level of performance. If your materials will reference this objective, we offer the following definition:

Net-Zero-Energy Ready Building (≈75 words)

“Net-zero energy buildings produce as much clean energy as they consume. They are up to 80 percent more energy efficient than a typical new building, and use on-site (or near-site) renewable energy systems to produce the remaining energy they need. A net-zero energy ready building is one that has been designed and built to a level of performance such that it could, with the addition of solar panels or other renewable energy technologies, achieve net-zero energy performance.”

Net-Zero-Energy Ready Building (≈40 words)

“A net-zero energy ready building is one that has been designed and built to a level of performance such that it could, with the addition of solar panels or other renewable energy technologies, meet its energy needs entirely on-site.”

Do not shorten to “net-zero ready,” as the specific goal must reference “energy,” and the term “net zero” alone can be used in multiple contexts (i.e. water, greenhouse gases, etc). If space allows, please use the full definition.

Usage of Brand Assets

The brand assets are tools to help educate and inform those who may be building to meet the standard or referencing it in bylaws. This section offers guidance on how parties may use the BC Energy Step Code brand assets.

The Energy Step Code Council is an advisory body, not a legal entity. As such, it does not “own” the BC Energy Step Code brand assets. Rather, it stewards their appropriate use. The Council has no legal enforcement power over parties that may be using the brand assets inappropriately, as we will define below. It also does not require sign-off on anyone who wishes to use the brand assets, but instead asks those interested parties to familiarize themselves with these guidelines.

In cases where an inappropriate use of the brand assets is identified, a member of the Council will contact the party in question, share this document, and encourage them to pursue a different approach.

Creative Commons License

To ensure that those who wish to increase awareness and understanding of the BC Energy Step Code can do so with as few restrictions as possible, the Energy Step Code Council makes the standard’s logo, colour palette, and explanatory graphics freely available under a Creative Commons license.

Creative Commons (CC) is a global nonprofit organization that enables sharing and reuse of creativity and knowledge by providing free legal tools. The tools help those who want to encourage reuse of their works by offering them for use under generous, standardized terms. Creators and other rights holders use CC licenses to offer certain usage rights to the public, while reserving other rights.

The Energy Step Code brand assets are available for others to use under the Creative Commons License **Attribution-NoDerivs 2.5 Canada (CC BY-ND 2.5 CA)**.

Here is what this license allows parties to do, and not do, with the BC Energy Step Code brand assets:

[Attribution-NoDerivs 2.5 Canada \(CC BY-ND 2.5 CA\)](#)

Under this license, you are free to:

Share: Copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made. You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

NoDerivatives — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you may not distribute the modified material.

No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

If your publication or printed materials include a credits section, please use the following text with icons. We request this, but in no way require it as a condition of use of the brand assets. Where space is very limited, parties may eliminate the second sentence, or the icons.



The Energy Step Code Council makes BC Energy Step Code logo and associated graphics available under the Creative Commons Attribution-NoDerivs 2.5 Canada License. To view this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nd/2.5/ca/>

Accuracy

As the BC Energy Step Code is a provincial regulation, anyone may of course speak or write about it as they see fit, in any forum or channel. However, while the overarching concept is simple, implementation details can be nuanced. Local governments may reference the regulation in many ways, and exceptions and variations exist for different building types in various climate zones.

As factual and consistent information will be critical to successful implementation—especially in the initial years—members of the Energy Step Code Council would be pleased to help any party confirm they are accurately characterizing the standard in reference or educational materials.

This is not an approval process. We in no way require parties to seek this feedback as a condition of using the brand assets. Instead, we offer this review as a courtesy in the spirit of encouraging accuracy and consistency.

If you are unsure and would like to run something by us, even something short, please contact the Council via the information at the end of this document.

Media and Social Media

Members of the media, bloggers, and digital publishers may freely use the brand assets without attribution or credit, so long as they adhere to the Brand Asset Usage Guidelines outlined below.

Endorsements

The Energy Step Code Council and the Province of British Columbia do not endorse any company, product, or service. It would be inappropriate to suggest in materials, whether they use the brand assets or not, that a given company, product, or service will ensure a party's compliance with the requirements of the BC Energy Step Code.

Brand Asset Usage Guidelines

The Energy Step Code council supports parties who wish to use the brand assets to increase awareness and understanding of the standard. It does not support uses that infer or imply a business relationship, commercial licensing, or that advance a narrow commercial agenda.

The following examples illustrate appropriate and inappropriate uses of the BC Energy Step Code logo and graphics, using hypothetical organizations and companies.

Examples: Appropriate Uses

- EXPLOR, a national consulting firm, would like to use the BC Energy Step Code color palette and graphics in an illustrated guide. The guide will outline strategies and the kinds of equipment and techniques that builders and architects might consider using to comply with various steps of the BC Energy Step Code. This usage is acceptable because it seeks to provide general advice and increase knowledge of high performance building practices, but does not suggest any one company, product, or service will help a builder attain compliance.
- The City of Woodville would like to host a Builders Breakfast Forum to share information and answer questions about the BC Energy Step Code. It would like to use the logo on its invitation and the explanatory graphics on a brochure for builders to take home. This usage is acceptable, because it is an example of a local government using the materials to educate and increase awareness of the standard and how it works.
- Merville Municipality is producing a video to show how builders are working with Step 3 of the BC Energy Step Code—which it now requires community-wide. The city would like to use the logo and graphics in the video. This usage is acceptable, because it is an example of a local government using the materials to educate and increase awareness of the standard and how it works.
- The British Columbia Institute of High-Performance Buildings offers continuing professional development classes on high-performance construction techniques. The school’s marketing team would like to use the BC Energy Step Code graphics on a “sidebar” in its course catalogue, to outline the new regulatory environment and the transition to net-zero-energy ready buildings. This usage is acceptable because it is providing contextual and educational information about the new standard for the benefit of builders who may be seeking to upgrade their skills. It does not suggest that the school has a commercial relationship with or has licensed the standard.

Examples: Inappropriate Uses

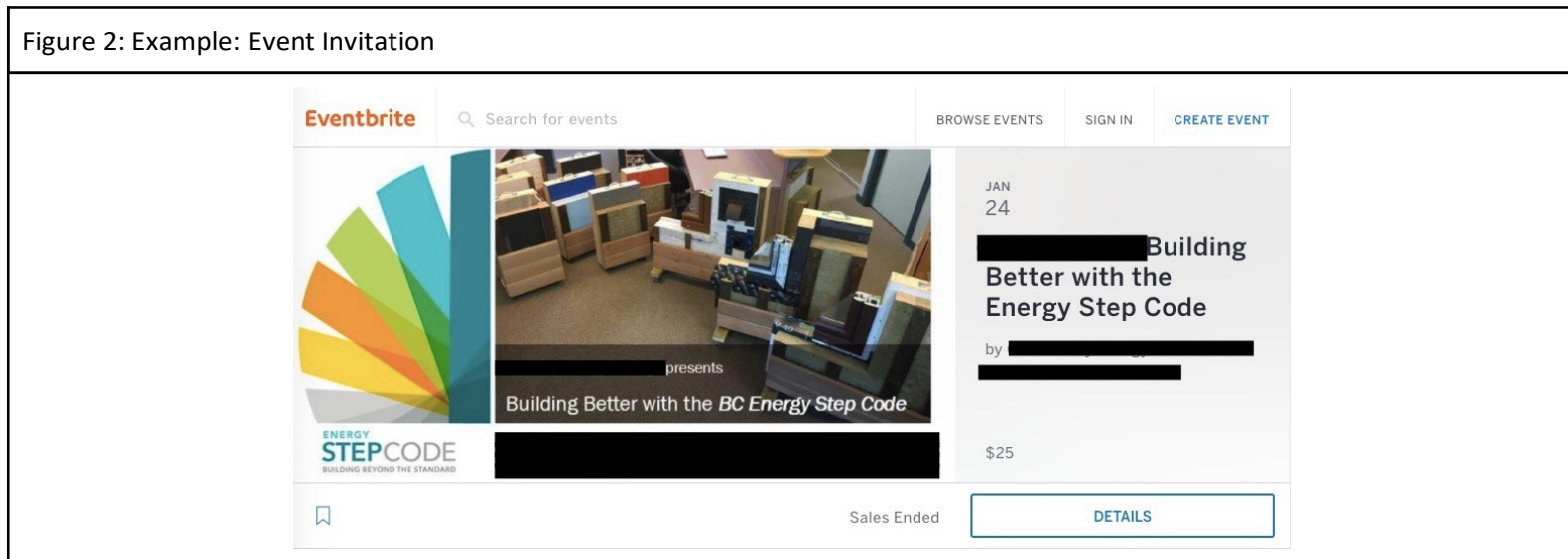
- Very Fine Homes, a builder of custom and spec houses, would like to use the BC Energy Step Code logo on its web site, alongside marks from “green building” programs, to communicate to prospective home buyers that it builds homes that comply with the standard. This is not an appropriate use, because it suggests that the company has a commercial relationship with, or has licensed, the standard.
- Airtight Services offers various energy-advisor services such as energy modeling and airtightness verification. The company would like to use the BC Energy Step Code logo on its website, alongside a description of its services and a description of the various metrics, to suggest that its technicians will help its builder clients verify compliance. This is not an appropriate use, because it suggests that the company has a commercial relationship with, or has licensed, the standard.
- BC Hammer, a company that offers builder professional development classes, is offering a social media promotion in the form of an online coupon (see Figure 1). The coupon offers 15% off course fees and uses the BC Energy Step Code logo. This is not an appropriate use because it uses the brand to support a private sector marketing campaign.

Figure 1: Coupon



- A local government and an NGO have partnered on a BC Energy Step Code builder training workshop, and have created an invitation using Eventbrite, an online event management service. This is an appropriate use of the Brand Assets. However, the event invitation alters the logo by compressing it horizontally and changing the location of the tagline/name combination. This contravenes the logo usage requirements outlined in the Design Guidelines that comprise Volume 1 of this *Brand Handbook*.

Figure 2: Example: Event Invitation



Available Printed and Digital Resources

Beyond the Brand Assets, the Energy Step Code Council makes available a variety of resources to interested parties to use or borrow in adherence with this document's guidelines. These include:

- A Microsoft PowerPoint presentation template.
- A mini-brochure, square format in three panels, available as a high-resolution, print-ready file.

To enquire about access to these resources, please reach out via the email provided below.

Conclusion, Questions, and Feedback

The BC Energy Step Code is not just a regulation, it is a market transformation tool that a diverse group of industry, government, and utility leaders developed through a deeply collaborative process. If it is to succeed, a variety of actors will need ready access to good information, so they can understand it and explain it to others.

For this reason, the Council provides graphical assets and tools to explain the standard, and supports any good-faith effort to get them into circulation.

However, the integrity of the brand is as important as the integrity of the technical metrics that the standard is built upon. We encourage parties using the brand assets do so in good faith in adherence with this handbook's recommendations.

For questions, comments, or feedback please contact us via the Buildings and Safety Standards Branch at the Office of Housing and Construction Standards, via Building.Safety@gov.bc.ca