

The Utah Model

Performance-Based Options Under the 2026 Energy Code Update

Prepared by RESNET • October 2026

Abstract

Utah's 2026 energy-code update provides an example of whole-home performance as an optional route to residential energy-code compliance. The state retained the 2021 International Residential Code (IRC), adopted the 2024 International Energy Conservation Code (IECC), and established Utah-specific amendments effective July 1, 2026.

For one- and two-family dwellings complying through the IRC, Utah's replacement Chapter 11 includes a HERS® Rating of 67 or lower as one compliance option. Separately, the residential ERI pathway under the amended 2024 IECC sets maximum scores by climate zone. These are distinct pathways and should not be treated as a single statewide score requirement.

This paper explains Utah's framework and its relevance to other states considering performance-based compliance. The supplied summary establishes the code structure but provides no post-implementation rating, savings, or construction-cost data.

1 National Relevance of the Utah Model

Like the Texas model, Utah recognizes whole-home performance as a way to provide builders with compliance flexibility. Utah's approach is organized around amendments to adopted model codes, with different options depending on whether the project follows the IRC or the residential provisions of the IECC.

The policy lesson is the importance of pairing flexible performance options with clear implementation guidance. Builders, raters, and code officials need to identify the governing code and pathway before selecting a target or documenting compliance.

2 Statutory Architecture of the 2026 Update

2.1 Adopted codes and effective date

Utah H.B. 65, Construction Code Amendments, 2026 General Session, provides the statutory basis identified in the supplied summary. Utah Code §15A-2-103 adopts the 2024 IECC while retaining the 2021 IRC. Section 29 of H.B. 65 establishes July 1, 2026 as the effective date, except for two unrelated provisions.

2.2 The IRC HERS compliance option

Utah Code §15A-3-203 replaces IRC Chapter 11 with a simplified state-specific energy chapter. For one- and two-family dwellings using this route, the summary identifies three compliance options:

Option	Compliance basis
Prescribed measures	State-prescribed insulation and envelope requirements
REScheck	Performance at least 5% above the Utah 2012 REScheck standard
HERS Rating	A HERS Rating of 67 or lower

2.3 Separate IECC ERI targets

For projects using the residential ERI pathway under the 2024 IECC, Utah Code §15A-3-701 amends Table R406.5 to establish the following maximum scores:

Climate zone	Maximum ERI
3	65
5	69
6	68

Tables 1 and 2. Compliance options and ERI limits from the supplied Utah summary, citing Utah Code §§15A-3-203 and 15A-3-701. The IRC HERS 67 option is distinct from the IECC climate-zone ERI limits.

ERI/HERS compliance is optional; it is not a universal requirement for every new residential building. The applicable pathway and remaining requirements must be identified for the project.

3 Conclusion

Utah demonstrates how a state can incorporate performance-based alternatives into its adopted codes while retaining multiple compliance routes. Its defining feature is the distinction between the IRC HERS 67 option and the amended IECC climate-zone ERI targets. Clear guidance, verified performance, and outcome tracking will help assess how effectively the framework serves builders, homeowners, and code officials.

Sources

1. State Summaries for HERS_ERI-UT_MA_NC, supplied document, Utah ERI Code Compliance and 2026 Energy Code Update section.
2. Utah H.B. 65, Construction Code Amendments, 2026 General Session, §§1, 11, 25 and 29; Utah Code §§15A-2-103, 15A-3-203 and 15A-3-701, as cited in the supplied summary.
3. The Texas Model, RESNET, August 2026; structural and visual model and general HERS verification background.

This paper adapts the supplied materials and does not constitute an independent update of code requirements.