Frequently Asked Questions
# Frequently Asked Questions

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What is the Brisbane Building Efficiency Program?

The Brisbane Building Efficiency Program was established in 2019 as Brisbane's new program to lower the environmental impact of existing buildings through reductions in energy and water consumption. The first step requires building owners to benchmark their energy and water use through the EPA's free ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager tool. Later, in the “Beyond Benchmarking” stage, buildings will need to show that they are high-performing or take steps to improve.

Click here to see the final, approved ordinance.

1. When does the law take effect?

Properties that are required to comply must complete and submit the initial benchmarking report on or before May 15, 2021, and annually no later than May 15 thereafter.

Background

1. What is benchmarking?

Benchmarking is tracking your performance against a standard. With this program, you will be dividing your energy use and water use with the square footage of your building to identify "efficiency". Those numbers will act as a baseline score to compare your efficiency to previous years or to similar buildings.

2. What are the benefits of benchmarking?

Benchmarking can prioritize energy-efficiency investments, track energy-efficiency improvements over time, and even gain you EPA recognition.

Conducting an energy or water benchmark helps to measure the performance of your building and lets you know how efficient or inefficient it may be. A significant portion of a company's operating expenses goes towards energy bills, so energy efficiency improvements can sometimes reduce these costs substantially.

The phrase "you cannot manage what you do not measure" directly applies; you must measure and track the energy and water efficiency of your building so that you can take appropriate action if costs are above average.

3. What is an ENERGY STAR or Water score?

The ENERGY STAR or Water score is a metric from 1 to 100 that demonstrates a building’s energy or water efficiency compared to similar buildings. Not all building types are eligible for ENERGY STAR or water scores and these are not required for compliance with this program. Instead, an Energy or Water Use Intensity is required which ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager calculates for you. It is energy or water divided by square feet of your building (e.g. 80 kBtu/sqft).

Am I required to comply?

You are required to comply if your building is (1) Privately owned and is 10,000 square feet or more OR (2) Owned by a local agency of the State that is required to comply with the City's building ordinances pursuant to
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California State Government Code Section 53090, et seq., or successor legislation, and is 10,000 square feet or more OR (3) Owned by the City of Brisbane and is 2,000 square feet or more. A roster of buildings will be posted to the city’s website.

1. How do building owners determine building type?
   Building types should be defined by how the building is used for occupancy. For example, if the building is classified as industrial but used for storage, the building should be determined as storage rather than industrial. As additional guidance, building owners can use ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager’s property type resources.

2. Are there any exemptions to the reporting requirement?
   You are not required to report to the City of Brisbane if:
   - Your building is owned by the City and less than 2,000 square feet
   - Your building is privately owned and less than 10,000 square feet
   - Your building is a one- or two-family dwelling and related accessory structure
   - Your building is a broadcast antenna, utility pumping station, or other building as determined by the Department of Public Works
   - Your building is a Condominium as defined in California Civil Code §§ 4125 and 6542
   - Your building is a multifamily dwelling with four or fewer units
   - The demolition permit for your entire building has been issued, or a schedule for demolition can be reasonably documented to the satisfaction of the Department

3. Is compliance required for industrial buildings?
   Yes, industrial buildings are required to submit data.

4. Is compliance required for historic buildings?
   Yes, historic buildings are required to comply.

5. Is compliance required for government-owned buildings?
   Except for buildings owned by the federal government, compliance is required for government-owned buildings.

6. Is compliance required for strip malls or open-air shopping centers?
   Compliance is required for each individual building that has more than 10,000 square feet of gross floor area. Separate buildings that have the appearance of being a single building due to a continuous façade should be treated as individual buildings. If a single building within the strip mall or open-air shopping center encompasses over 10,000 square feet, then that individual building will need to comply. Also, to align with the State’s “AB802” Benchmarking Program, multiple buildings collectively 10,000 sqft or more behind one meter are also required to comply.

7. Is compliance required if my building was only occupied recently or does not have 12 months of data?
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If your building did not have a Certificate of Occupancy or Temporary Certificate of Occupancy for the entire calendar year or was not occupied, due to renovation, for the entire calendar year, building characteristics are still required to be reported. Energy and water data are not required.

If your building did not receive energy or water services for the entire calendar year, building characteristics are still required to be reported; energy and water data are not required.

8. Some people consider townhomes the same as condominiums. Does the City of Brisbane make this distinction?

If the townhouses in question are legally condominiums, as defined in California Civil Code §§ 4125 and 6542, then they would be exempt both from data access and reporting.

9. Does my building square footage include parking areas?

When calculating your square footage in determining if you are required to comply, covered parking structures should be included while open and uncovered parking lots should be excluded.

When entering your gross floor area into your Portfolio Manager account, there is a separate field for parking so you can separate the parking area from your building area.

10. Do new construction buildings need to comply?

When the building has received water or energy services for more than half of a calendar year, it must comply with the benchmarking sections of the ordinance. For example, if the building was constructed in 2019 and received energy or water services on or before July 1, 2020, it would have to report benchmarking information by May 15, 2021.

For Beyond Benchmarking requirements, buildings constructed in the 5 years before the compliance deadline are automatically eligible for the Performance Path and no further action is necessary. Newly constructed commercial or multifamily buildings receiving a certificate of occupancy after May 15, 2018, or industrial buildings after May 15, 2019, the property owner shall comply with the requirements at the time of the next reporting cycle corresponding to the property type (e.g. 2028 or 2029).

How do I comply?

Please refer to the Brisbane Building Efficiency Program Reporting Checklist for more information.

1. By when do I need to complete this?

   Reporting is due by May 15, 2021 for privately-owned buildings. Reporting continues annually after the first report, due May 15 every year.

2. How often must I report to the City of Brisbane?
Reporting for benchmarking of energy and water continues annually after the first report, due May 15 every year.

3. What is the cost of complying?
   There are no fees associated with reporting your data to the City of Brisbane. ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager is also a free online tool to create the reports.

4. Who can prepare the report or send the data?
   Anyone can open an ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager account and create the report. The EPA offers training videos and guides, and there are resources available on the City of Brisbane’s Building Efficiency Program website. Some building owners or managers may choose to have internal staff to manage the account and submit reports, while others may hire an external service provider.

5. What if I have a different energy or water management software other than ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager?
   ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager is the only way for building owners to comply. The building owner or agent must use Portfolio Manager.

6. How do I know if I have successfully submitted the report and have complied?
   After submitting the compliance report through ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, you will receive an email from ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager as a confirmation.

7. What if the building owner does not comply?
   Failure to comply may subject the owner to noncompliance fees as specified in Section 1.16 of the Brisbane Municipal Code.

8. If there is joint ownership of a building like offices and hospitals, who is responsible for reporting?
   ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager has the ability to assign multiple owners of a property. This way both owners can access the property and make changes if necessary. The reporting responsibility falls on both owners but usually one owner takes the lead in compliance. If neither report, both owners will be at fault.

ENERGY STAR and Data Collection

1. What sources of energy and water are to be reported?
   Energy: Electricity, natural gas, steam, heating oil, or other products sold by a utility to a customer of a building, or renewable on-site electricity generation. Portfolio Manager also includes fields for other forms of energy that you can input and track.
   Water: Municipally Supplied Potable Water, Municipally Supplied Reclaimed Water, Well Water
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2. What fields are required in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager for compliance?
   Basic property details such as address, total gross floor area, property type, occupancy, year built, weekly operating hours, number of computers, and number of workers on main shift are required in ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager, along with 12 months of energy and water data. If you do not have accurate values for other fields, you can use default or approximate values until you can get more accurate values.

   Additionally, add the following property details to the Custom ID fields under ‘Details’ > ‘Unique Identifiers’: Custom ID 1 - Number of Floors, Custom ID 2 - Electricity Provider, Custom ID 3 - Electricity Rate.

   To streamline the process of collecting data, you can visit ENERGY STAR’s website to download a data collection worksheet of all the information you will need to fill out for your specific property type.

3. Is an ENERGY STAR score required for reporting?
   No, the only requirements are to submit a report to the City of Brisbane with the appropriate information such as aggregate energy and water data and/or building characteristics.

4. Is the Unique Building ID (UBID) required for either ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager or requesting data access?
   The Unique Building ID (UBID) is required for each building reported to the City of Brisbane. Your UBID can be found here. Add the UBID to your building in Portfolio Manager under ‘Details’ > ‘Unique Identifiers’ > ‘Standard ID.’ Select ‘Unique Building Identifier (UBID)’ in the dropdown and enter your UBID in the blank cell. The UBID is not required to request data from the utility.

5. Can I collect data manually instead of through Web Services?
   Yes, you can either 1) insert energy totals individually from bills directly on the website or 2) use Portfolio Manager’s upload template to add data in bulk. Here is a link on how to Enter data into Portfolio Manager which focuses on energy data.

6. How do you enter meter data when your building consumes or produces renewable energy?
   If you track your building’s energy generated from renewable sources separate from PG&E, add another meter for the renewable energy to your ESPM property by following these instructions. If your building’s energy generated from renewable sources is tracked through your PG&E net meter, and you do not have access to additional data to separately track renewable and grid energy, no further action is required. If resulting energy use is negative, ESPM will ask for a “Negative Energy Justification” and at this time you may select “My utility bill shows negative values.”

7. How do owners get access to the whole building data from the utility?
   If you are a PG&E customer, to obtain aggregated whole-building data, create an account and register a building on PG&E’s Building Benchmarking Portal. For instructions on how to use the Building Benchmarking portal, please review PG&E’s Building Benchmarking Portal - Guidance & Instructions.
If your building has fewer than 3 accounts, you will need **data access authorizations** from the account holders.

8. **Would we need to request utility data for the retail tenants who pay their own electricity bill?**

   Yes, whole-building data is required, including tenant-owned/managed spaces. For nonresidential buildings, if you have 3 or more tenants, you can request whole-building data from your utility without needing tenant authorization.

9. **What if I cannot get tenant authorization or the utility customers refuse to release their energy use data to building owners?**

   Tenants are required to share their energy and water data with the property owner of a building with one or two non-residential tenants. A tenant’s failure to provide the authorization to the utility companies subjects the tenant to the penalty provisions of the ordinance; owners should report non-complying tenants to the City. A tenant’s failure to provide the authorization to the utility companies does not relieve the property owner’s benchmarking obligations but such obligation may be satisfied by a partial building benchmarking report as approved by the Director.

10. **What happens if I have requested data from the utility, but they have not yet completed my request in time for the deadline?**

    Please complete your submission as soon as you have received energy use data from the utility, even if the compliance deadline has passed.

11. **How do I check or validate the data on ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager?**

    ENERGY STAR Portfolio Manager has a helpful tool called the Data Quality Checker to check for any gaps or errors in the data entered for a specified timeframe. It is a requirement for the benchmarking program to run this tool.

    Once all energy data for the entire calendar year has been entered into Portfolio Manager, owners can run the Data Quality Checker under “Check for Possible Errors” on the Summary tab. Any red errors found related to energy use must be addressed before an energy report can be submitted.

    Additionally, you can review the data before submission by previewing the data response.