



CEQA and Climate Change

The accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere over time is likely to lead to dangerous climate change in the coming decades. Since a key purpose of CEQA is to maintain the quality of California's environment, both now and into the future, reducing the risk of dangerous climate change is an important objective under CEQA. This page provides links to valuable resources and guidance addressing climate change and CEQA.

CEQA Guidelines

By enacting SB 97 in 2007, California's lawmakers expressly recognized the need to analyze greenhouse gas emissions as a part of the CEQA process. [SB 97](#) required OPR to develop, and the Natural Resources Agency to adopt, amendments to the CEQA Guidelines addressing the analysis and mitigation of greenhouse gas emissions. Those CEQA Guidelines amendments clarified several points, including the following:

- Lead agencies must analyze the greenhouse gas emissions of proposed projects, and must reach a conclusion regarding the significance of those emissions. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15064.4.)
- When a project's greenhouse gas emissions may be significant, lead agencies must consider a range of potential mitigation measures to reduce those emissions. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15126.4(c).)
- Lead agencies must analyze potentially significant impacts associated with placing projects in hazardous locations, including locations potentially affected by climate change. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15126.2(a).)
- Lead agencies may significantly streamline the analysis of greenhouse gases on a project level by using a programmatic greenhouse gas emissions reduction plan meeting certain criteria. (See CEQA Guidelines § 15183.5(b).)
- CEQA mandates analysis of a proposed project's potential energy use (including transportation-related energy), sources of energy supply, and ways to reduce energy demand, including through the use of efficient transportation alternatives. (See CEQA Guidelines, Appendix F.)

As part of the administrative rulemaking process, the Natural Resources Agency developed a [Final Statement of Reasons](#) explaining the legal and factual bases, intent, and purpose of the CEQA Guidelines amendments. Other rulemaking documents can be accessed on the Natural Resources Agency's [rulemaking website](#). The [amendments to the CEQA Guidelines](#) implementing SB 97 became effective on March 18, 2010.

OPR'S TECHNICAL ADVISORIES ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLIMATE ACTION PLANNING

Prior to enactment of the amendments to the CEQA Guidelines described above, OPR developed a [Technical Advisory](#) suggesting relevant ways to address climate change in CEQA analyses. It also lists potential mitigation measures, describes useful computer models, and points to other important resources.

OPR is currently developing a Technical Advisory that will provide guidance on specific topics related climate action planning and the use of plans for the reduction of greenhouse gases in a CEQA analysis. While that Technical Advisory is under development, readers may be interested in a [presentation](#) that OPR provided during its June 20, 2011, Local Government Roundtable regarding climate action planning, as well as [questions and responses](#) associated with that presentation.

OTHER RESOURCES

Beyond the guidance documents referred to above, several other agencies and organizations have developed resources for CEQA practitioners.

The Office of the Attorney General, for example, has created a [website](#) that links to its fact sheet on mitigation measures, CEQA comment letters, settlement agreements, and resources designed for local governments.

The California Air Pollution Control Officers Association (CAPCOA) has pioneered several important guides, including [CEQA & Climate Change](#), which includes options for quantifying and evaluating the significance of greenhouse gas emissions, [Model Policies for Greenhouse Gas Emissions in General Plans](#), and [Quantifying Greenhouse Gas Mitigation Measures](#).

The Bay Area Air Quality Management District recently adopted an update to its [BAAQMD CEQA Guidelines](#), which includes numeric thresholds for greenhouse gas emissions and guidance on qualified climate action plans. The BAAQMD also provides numerous tools and [other resources](#).