

# Colorado Association Facilitates Residential and Commercial Energy Efficiency

ENERGY EFFICIENCY BUSINESS COALITION STRIVES TO EXPAND THE ENERGY MARKETPLACE.



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**T**he Energy Efficiency Business Coalition (EEBC) is a statewide trade association of non-utility companies that provide energy efficiency, demand response, and data analytics products and services in Colorado.

The mission of EEBC is to expand the energy marketplace for its member companies by advocating for programs that fund energy-efficiency upgrades of homes and commercial buildings, influencing policies, and providing information on current

market trends, thus creating opportunities for businesses to grow.

EEBC is a nonprofit 501(c)(6) with a board of directors representing different sectors of the energy-efficiency industry that services Colorado and the Southwest. Services are provided by the group's staff, attorneys, contracted consultants, and a combination of volunteer support from its board of directors and member companies. EEBC has professional anti-trust, conflict of interest, and client confidentiality protection policies.

## THE POWER OF COLLABORATION

EEBC began with a group of six companies that wanted to influence the Public Utilities Commission (PUC) to make changes to the Xcel Energy's Demand Side Management (DSM) Program incentives and measures, which are called rebates in the field, according to Patricia Rothwell, EEBC executive director.

"As individual companies in the energy-efficiency building science and construction industry, we didn't have



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– Patricia Rothwell, EEBC executive director

enough influence. When we began working as a group to promote our ideas, suggestions, and recommendations based on market development in the field, we were able to ensure that Xcel Energy’s DSM Programs were successful for Xcel’s energy-saving goals and easier and effective to deliver in the field.”

Another critical reason EEBC became a trade association is because Colorado is one of the few states that requires stakeholder companies to have an attorney to join in the legal settlement process as an intervener (participate) through independently owned utilities, such as Xcel Energy and Black Hills Energy.

“EEBC companies decided to pool their money and resource to share in the legal cost to intervene,” Rothwell says. “EEBC makes intervening every two years in Xcel Energy’s legal docket affordable for many companies, ranging from small contractors to large manufacturers, allowing them to intervene and improve rebates to deliver in the field and front lines.”

Founded in 2008, EEBC’s member

businesses include DSM implementation and evaluation experts, demand response companies, engineering and architecture firms, data analytics firms, contractors, financing experts, commercial energy service companies, workforce training entities, and manufacturers and distributors of energy-efficiency equipment.

The association facilitates industry collaboration between energy-efficiency businesses through networking opportunities and supports policies and programs that create sustainable jobs for long-term economic vitality and growth, as well as provide cost-effective energy while improving the environment and public health.

“EEBC is a statewide trade association of businesses representing the supply chain in the energy-efficiency industry with 75 companies and 300 individual members ranging from small independent businesses to mid-sized to large companies,” Rothwell says.

All members are in the construction/energy industries—contractors, distributors, and manufactures of

insulation, air sealing, HVACR and heat pumps, DSM implementers, electrical, financing, and engineering. These members provide products and services with both gas and electric technologies in buildings across Colorado.

“All members successfully install high-performance technologies in all industries, but specifically for HVACR and heat pump technologies, using energy efficiency and emerging strategic (beneficial) electrification incentives in those projects. These businesses utilize and benefit from utility rebates—incentives and measurements—in utility programs,” Rothwell adds.

EEBC does not fund energy-efficiency projects. Instead, the association provides a platform for its members so they have the resources to fund or get hired for projects. “Many of our members are experts in energy-efficiency advisement and implementation. Many are the first adopters and have pioneered these technologies in the field for years. One contractor has 30 years of experience in this area.”

EEBC does not provide rebates to energy-saving businesses and consumers. However, the association facilitates opportunities for its members to provide rebates to their customers, both businesses and consumers.

In short, EEBC keeps members apprised and ahead of energy-transition trending, resources, and funding opportunities, and gives them a voice in legislation that will create an environment that is more conducive to business success.

Through these efforts, the association is able to improve the environment and public health. One of the most important outcomes from energy-efficiency building strategies and mechanicals is improving indoor air quality and comfort in residential home and commercial buildings. This is accomplished through its members.



## THE NATE CONNECTION

EEBC's relationship with NATE over the years has helped to improve the quality of HVACR technicians in Colorado, according to Lauren Poole, past/emeritus executive director of EEBC, and currently manager of sustainability at the Colorado School of Mines.

"EEBC's relationship with NATE is one of mutual advocacy that began many years ago," Poole says. "EEBC advocates for utility DSM programs that include utility rebates for the installation of energy-efficient HVACR systems and heat pumps. If these systems are not installed correctly, they won't work correctly.

"As part of EEBC's advocacy for DSM programs, it recommends to PUC that public utilities in Colorado use contractors that are NATE-certified to install energy-efficient HVACR systems and heat pumps so that customers can get the greatest energy, cost savings, and comfort from their systems. In the past, this included having utilities serve as a proctor for NATE testing of contractors participating in their programs."

Xcel Energy's "2021/2022 Demand Side Management Plan: Electric and Natural Gas Public Service Company of Colorado" report, released on March 16, 2021, notes that trade partner companies interested in performing certain types of equipment installations must have one technician in each certification area in which they are participating. This includes NATE certification in Air Conditioning or Air-to-Air Heat Pump. Service or installation certification is accepted.

To be eligible for Standard AC or Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) equipment with Quality Installation (QI) or High-Efficiency AC/ASHP equipment with QI rebates:

- The customer must use a registered contractor with a

NATE-certified technician for the installation of the new system and who annually pass required online classes. These contractors have agreed to the terms of the product and meet the requirements related to quality installation practices. A list of registered contractors can be found on the Xcel Energy website.

- The technician's NATE certification can be used by one contractor company only, for the purpose of qualifying the company to offer these rebates. If the technician's NATE certification is in ASHP, the technician's company meets the AC NATE certification requirement automatically.

## NEW COLORADO INITIATIVE

Colorado Governor Jared Polis recently signed SB21-246 into law, making his state the first in the nation to pass an electrification policy with support from organized labor. The Colorado BlueGreen Alliance-backed legislation is expected to help Coloradans upgrade to efficient electric appliances, furnaces, and water heaters that keep their bills low and the air clean.

"Colorado has done a great job setting up tools for building owners to make their homes and businesses more efficient and climate-friendly," says BlueGreen Alliance Director of Colorado and State Economic Transition Policy Chris Markuson.

"The Colorado Property Assessed Clean Energy (C-PACE) program, which allows homeowners to finance energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements, is another great example of our state making it easy to upgrade. This bill will make efficient electric appliances even more affordable and help households and businesses connect with local qualified contractors to get the job done."

Rothwell of EEBC sees more use of heat pumps throughout the state, which will help to achieve energy-efficiency goals. The conversion from gas water heaters to high-efficiency heat pump water heaters is happening, albeit rather slowly.

"Heat pumps today represent a tiny fraction of replacement heating systems. The challenges of educating both contractors and consumers are enormous. Government and utility programs can help unlock the growth of the market," EEBC reports in its "New Colorado Policies to Advance Building Electrification and Energy Efficiency Will Boost Jobs Statewide" analysis, released in May 2021.

Abram Conder, co-owner of Pueblo's Flow Right Plumbing Heating and Cooling, which serves southern Colorado, has experienced how much utility programs like those enabled by SB21-246 can help. His electric co-op utility recently started offering incentives to help customers finance high-efficiency systems, including heat pumps.

"It helps streamline the process and homeowners can do more," Conder explains. "Customers often can cut their monthly payments for loans on high-efficiency home improvements to roughly what they are paying in utility bills. It's a win-win for the customer. If you do solar, and then insulate your house and put in a heat pump, you are going to be heating and cooling your house for almost nothing."

Conder, who sells about 20 residential ducted heat pump systems and hundreds of ductless mini-split systems a year, notes that more education is needed to meet the potential of this technology. "You're talking about 99% of the market for potential growth," he says. "Every home has the potential for heat pump electrification." ●

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