

# Zero Emissions Building: U.S. Department of Energy Issues National Definition



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The United States Department of Energy (“DOE”) has issued what it deems the:

...National Definition for a Zero Emissions Building (“National Definition”).

The National Definition was developed by DOE’s Office of Energy Efficiency & Renewable Energy.

In a report introducing the National Definition, DOE describes such a building as:

- Highly energy efficient.
- Does not emit greenhouse gasses directly from energy use.
- Powered solely by clean energy.

The motivation for developing such a definition is the role of buildings as sources of carbon dioxide.

DOE states that residential and commercial buildings are responsible for 1/3 of United States’ emissions. As a result, the federal agency in a prior report set a goal of reducing United States’ building emissions by:

- 65% by 2035.
- 90% by 2050.

See U.S. Department of Energy/Decarbonizing the U.S. Economy by 2050: National Blueprint for the Buildings Sector.

The National Definition is stated to have been developed to support the buildings sector moving toward zero emissions and advance public-and-private-sector climate goals.

Note that the National Definition is not deemed a regulatory standard. Instead, it is described as:

...guidance that public and private entities may adopt to determine whether a building has zero emissions from operational energy use, including emissions from tenants.

DOE intends to issue additional components of this definition to address:

- Emissions from producing, transporting, installing, and disposing of building material.
- Minimizing the impacts of refrigerants.

A copy of the National Definition can be downloaded [here](#).