Global Sustainable Buildings Guide - Mexico

Green Certification

| Contents |
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| To generate table of contents, right-click here and select **Update Field.** |

# Is there a nationally adopted and recognized form of certification for buildings? What is it and is it mandatory for all new buildings and refurbished buildings?

Even though Mexico has some platforms and programs that promote environmental awareness, there is still a lot more to be done. The national legislation could introduce additional requirements that would benefit both the environment and the population.

Cooperation is an important factor in this matter. Organizations like Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology (BREEAM), Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) and the World Green Building Council, among others, are working side by side with many countries to promote environmental awareness and the benefits that often follow.

According to the US Green Building Council, Mexico ranks 10th in the world on its annual list of “Top 10 Countries and Regions for LEED in 2023” with 86 certified new projects, and a total of around 729 registered projects under LEED across the country. Of this figure, six projects in Mexico City are certified under the International Living Future Institute’s Living Building Challenge, and 12 projects are certified under the Certification Program for Sustainable Buildings in Mexico City, also known as Programa de Certificacion de Edificaciones Sustentables (PCES). All of these programs are voluntary and nonmandatory.

In Mexico, legislative activity has played an important role in promoting environmental measures through the issuance of the General Law of Climate Change (Ley General de Cambio Climático), the Environmental Liability Law (Ley de Responsabilidad Ambiental) and the Energy Transition Law, published on 24 December 2015 in the Official Journal of the Federation (Ley de Transición Energética). The Energy Transition Law abrogated the Law for Sustainable Use of Energy (Ley para Aprovechamiento Sustentable de la Energía) and the Law for the Use of Renewable Energy and Financing of Energy Transition (Ley para el Aprovechamiento de Energías Renovables y el Financiamiento de la Transición Energética). Among its other objectives, the General Law of Climate Change promotes the practice of energy efficiency, the development and use of renewable energy, and the development of technology for low-carbon emissions. The Environmental Liability Law regulates liability borne out of harm to the environment and stipulates repair and compensation. The Energy Transition Law aims to regulate (i) the sustainable use of energy, (ii) the obligations of clean energy, (iii) the reduction of pollutant emissions from the electricity industry, thereby maintaining the competitiveness of the productive sectors, and (iv) some nonmandatory frameworks to promote sustainability for buildings.

Most of the environmental and energy transition regulations that deal with sustainability issues in Mexico are called the Mexican Official Standards (Normas Oficiales Mexicanas). As these standards continue to be created and applied at a national level, regularization is gradually growing, and more people within the private and public sectors are realizing their importance.

In 2008, the government of Mexico City created a program known as the Certification Program for Sustainable Buildings (Programa de Certificacion de Edificaciones Sustentables). Its goal is to promote eco-friendly building construction, refurbishments, and remodeling by establishing a standard by which commercial and residential buildings can be graded according to their sustainability level. It offers several tax incentives, such as discounts on water supply, payroll tax, property taxes and construction licenses, financing at preferable rates, and expediting of government paperwork.

Twelve buildings have been certified under this program, and 49 buildings are in the process of being certified — an indication of the certification’s growing popularity.

Mexican authorities constantly update the Mexican Official Standard that regularizes and categorizes the requirements for sustainable buildings, and the technical specifications for equipment and products to be used in such buildings.[1] In particular, the standard for sustainable buildings, which today is called NMX-AA-164-SCFI-2013 “Sustainable Building – Criteria and Minimal Environmental Requirements” (NMX), was created in 2013. It is to be applied voluntarily at a national level to all new and refurbished buildings within Mexican territory, whether public or private.

It applies to various phases of development, such as design, construction, operation, maintenance, and demolition, including remodeling and renovation projects.

This NMX has been operative for more than a year. Due to its voluntary nature, it remains to be seen how many buildings will comply and how much of an effect it will have across the country in the near future.

[1] NOM-003-ENER-2011 Thermal efficiency of water heaters for domestic and commercial use; NOM-007-ENER-2014 Energy efficiency for lighting systems in non-residential buildings; NOM-008-ENER-2001 Energy efficiency for non-residential building envelope; NOM-009-ENER-2014 Energy efficiency in industrial thermal insulation systems; NOM-011-ENER-2006 Energy efficiency in air conditioners central operation type; NOM-017-ENER/SCFI-2012 Energy efficiency and security requirements for ballasted compact fluorescent lamps; NOM-018-ENER-2011 Thermal insulation for buildings; NOM-020-ENER-2011 Energy efficiency for envelope in residential use buildings; NOM-021-ENER/SCFI-2008 Energy efficiency and safety requirements for air conditioners room type; NOM-023-ENER-2010 Energy efficiency in air conditioners split type; NOM-024-ENER-2012 Thermal and optical characteristics for glass and glazing systems for buildings; NOM-030-ENER-2012 Energy efficiency for light emitting diodes (LED), residential and non-residential use; NOM-031-ENER-2012 Energy efficiency for LED for roads and public outdoors areas; NOM-032-ENER-2013 Energy efficiency in standby power products.

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