

(Effective until March 15, 2024)

WAC 51-50-490000 Appendix N—Solar readiness. The provisions contained in this appendix are not mandatory unless specifically referenced in the local adopting ordinance.

490101.1 General. A *solar zone* shall be provided on nonresidential buildings of any size that are 5 stories or less in height above grade plane, and shall be located on the roof of the building or on another structure elsewhere on the site. The *solar zone* shall be in accordance with Sections 490101.3 through 490101.9 and the *International Fire Code*.

EXCEPTION: A *solar zone* is not required where the solar exposure of the building's roof area is less than 75 percent of that of an unshaded area, as measured by one of the following:

- Incident solar radiation expressed in kWh/ft² per year using typical meteorological year (TMY) data;
- Annual sunlight exposure expressed in cumulative hours per year using TMY data;
- Shadow studies indicating that the roof area is more than 25 percent in shadow, on September 21 at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., 12:00 p.m., 1:00 p.m., and 2:00 p.m. solar time.

490101.2 Definitions. The following words and terms shall, for the purposes of this appendix, have the meanings shown herein. Refer to Chapter 2 of the *International Building Code* for general definitions.

SOLAR ZONE. A clear area or areas reserved solely for current and future installation of photovoltaic or solarwater heating systems.

490101.3 Minimum area. The minimum area of the *solar zone* shall be determined by one of the following methods, whichever results in the smaller area:

- 40 percent of roof area. The roof area shall be calculated as the horizontally-projected gross roof area, less the area covered by skylights, occupied roof decks and planted areas.

- 20 percent of electrical service size. The electrical service size shall be the rated capacity of the total of all electrical services to the building. The required *solar zone* size shall be based upon 10 peak watts of PV per square foot.

EXCEPTION: Subject to the approval of the *building official*, buildings with extensive rooftop equipment that would make full compliance with this section impractical shall be permitted to reduce the size of the *solar zone* required by Section N101.3 to the maximum practicable area.

490101.4 Contiguous area. The *solar zone* is permitted to be comprised of smaller separated subzones. Each subzone shall be at least 5 feet wide in the narrowest dimension.

490101.5 Obstructions. The *solar zone* shall be free of pipes, vents, ducts, HVAC equipment, skylights and other obstructions, except those serving photovoltaics or solar water heating systems within the *solar zone*. Photovoltaics or solar water heating systems are permitted to be installed within the *solar zone*. The *solar zone* is permitted to be located above any such obstructions, provided that the racking for support of the future system is installed at the time of construction, the elevated *solar zone* does not shade other portions of the *solar zone*, and its height is permitted by the *International Building Code* and other applicable codes.

490101.6 Shading. The *solar zone* shall be set back from any existing or new object on the building or site that is located south, east, or west of the *solar zone* a distance at least two times the object's height above the nearest point on the roof surface. Such objects include, but are not limited to, taller portions of the building itself, parapets, chimneys, antennas, signage, rooftop equipment, trees and roof plantings. No portion of the *solar zone* shall be located on a roof slope greater than 2:12 that faces within 45 degrees of true north.

490101.7 Access. Areas contiguous to the *solar zone* shall provide access pathways and provisions for emergency smoke ventilation as required by the *International Fire Code*.

490101.8 Structural integrity. The as-designed dead load and live load for the *solar zone* shall be clearly marked on the record drawings, and shall accommodate future photovoltaic or solar water heating arrays at an assumed dead load of 4 pounds per square foot in addition to other required live and dead loads. For photovoltaic systems, a location for future inverters shall be designated either within or adjacent to the *solar zone*, with a minimum area of 2 square feet for each 1,000 square feet of *solar zone* area, and shall accommodate an assumed dead load of 175 pounds per square foot. Where photovoltaic or solar water heating systems are installed in the *solar zone*, structural analysis shall be based upon calculated loads, not upon these assumed loads.

490101.9 Photovoltaic or solar water heating interconnection provisions. Buildings shall provide for the future interconnection of either a photovoltaic system in accordance with Section 490101.9.1 or a solar water heating system in accordance with Section 490101.9.2.

490101.9.1 Photovoltaic interconnection. A capped roof penetration sleeve shall be provided in the vicinity of the future inverter, sized to accommodate the future photovoltaic system conduit. Interconnection of the future photovoltaic system shall be provided for at the main service panel, either ahead of the service disconnecting means or at the end of the bus opposite the service disconnecting means, in one of the following forms:

- a. A space for the mounting of a future overcurrent device, sized to accommodate the largest standard rated overcurrent device that is less than 20 percent of the bus rating;
- b. Lugs sized to accommodate conductors with an ampacity of at least 20 percent of the bus rating, to enable the mounting of an external overcurrent device for interconnection.

The electrical construction documents shall indicate the following:

- a. *Solar zone* boundaries and access pathways;
- b. Location for future inverters and metering equipment; and
- c. Route for future wiring between the photovoltaic panels and the inverter, and between the inverter and the main service panel.

N101.9.2 Solar water heating interconnection. Two capped pipe tees shall be provided upstream of the domestic water heating equipment to provide plumbing interconnections between a future solar water heating system and the domestic water heating system. Two roof penetration sleeves shall be provided in the vicinity of the *solar zone*, capable of accommodating supply and return piping for a future solar water heating system. The plumbing construction documents shall indicate the following:

- a. *Solar zone* boundaries and access pathways;
- b. Location for future hot water storage tanks; and
- c. Route for future piping between the *solar zone* and the plumbing interconnection point, following the shortest feasible pathway.

[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 16-03-064, § 51-50-490000, filed 1/19/16, effective 7/1/16.]

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[Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031, 19.27.074, and 19.27.540. WSR 23-02-073, 23-12-103, and 23-20-023, § 51-50-490000, filed 1/4/23, 6/7/23, and 9/25/23, effective 3/15/24. Statutory Authority: RCW 19.27.031 and 19.27.074. WSR 16-03-064, § 51-50-490000, filed 1/19/16, effective 7/1/16.]