

2021 Washington State Energy Code (WSEC) Residential Significant Changes: Water Heating

BEGINNING JULY 1, 2023

In new construction, **primary** water heating must be provided by a heat pump system. Both unitary heat pump water heaters (HPWHs) and split systems are acceptable.

Some exceptions apply. For example, homes with less than 1,000 square feet of conditioned floor area may be served by other water heating system types.

Supplementary heating for heat pump water heating systems may be provided by other system types.

Also, water heaters must now be installed within the conditioned space of the home unless it has a system efficiency of 2.0 UEF or better.

For complete code text, exceptions, and control requirements, see 2021 WSEC Section R403.5.7

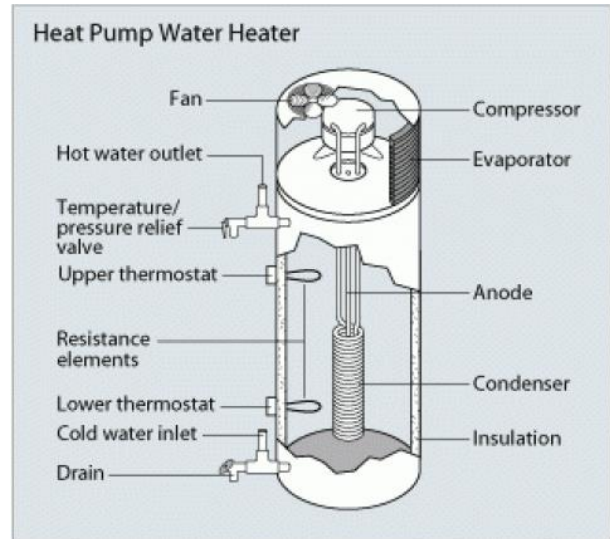
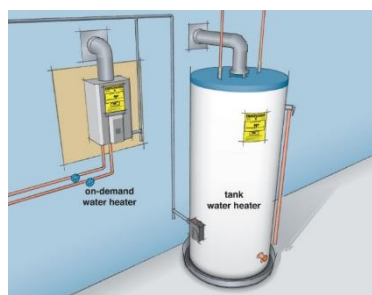


Figure 1 Heat pump water heater diagram.
Source [Heat Pump Water Heaters | Department of Energy](#)



In existing buildings, other water heating system types may be replaced like-in-kind so long as the rated capacity of the equipment is not greater than the existing.

For full code text, see 2021 WSEC Section R503.1.3

Figure 2 Examples of water heater types that can be replaced like-in-kind.
Source [Estimating Costs and Efficiency of Storage, Demand, and Heat Pump Water Heaters | Department of Energy](#)

In new or existing buildings, this change does not prohibit gas supply from being provided to homes. This change does not ban the use of gas or propane for cooking appliances or decorative gas fireplaces.



This handout summarizes one significant change in the 2021 Washington State Energy Code (WSEC) for those buildings defined in the code as *Residential Buildings*. See complete code text for details.