Alabama's new energy code, in plain words

What changes for home builders in 2027, and the easiest ways to pass.

The short version

- Alabama has a new energy code for homes. It applies to residential construction beginning January 1, 2027.
- Three things change most: the house leak test, the duct test, and how much insulation you need.
- There is more than one way to pass. For many builders, the **HERS score path** is the simplest. See page 2.

What changes

WHAT	TODAY	FROM 2027	WHAT IT MEANS FOR YOU
Blower door test How leaky the house is	5 or less	**7.0 or less**	Easier to pass on the standard path. Measured in air changes per hour (ACH50).
Fresh-air system Mechanical ventilation	Not tested	**Airflow is tested**	The new code calls for a fresh-air system. A tight house (5.0 or less) needs a balanced one: as much air in as out. Pick your system at design time.
Duct leak test	4 or less. Ducts fully inside the house are exempt.	**4 or less. Every duct system is tested.**	Homes with all the ducts inside now need a duct test too. Per 100 sq ft of floor area (CFM25). At rough-in with no air handler yet: 3.
Attic insulation	R-30	**R-38**	About one-quarter more insulation in the attic.
Wood-frame walls	R-13	**R-20, or R-13 plus R-5 foam board**	A 2x4 wall with R-13 batts alone no longer meets the table.
Spray foam at the roof deck	R-20 is allowed	**The R-20 shortcut is gone**	Expect R-38 at the roof line. Confirm with your building official.
Slab edge	None	**R-10, 2 feet deep**	Not required where the building official names a very heavy termite area.
Windows	U-0.35 SHGC 0.27	**U-0.30** **SHGC 0.25**	Check your window order sheets for 2027 jobs.

The insulation and window numbers are for most of Alabama (Climate Zone 3A) on the standard path. In Mobile, Baldwin, Coffee, Covington, Dale, Escambia, Geneva, Henry and Houston counties (Zone 2A): walls stay R-13, no slab edge insulation is needed, and windows are U-0.40 and SHGC 0.25. Attics are R-38 there too. The test limits are the same statewide.

Three ways to meet the new code

PATH 1

Standard path

Build to the table on page 1. Then earn extra efficiency credits from Alabama's list, such as better heating and cooling, ducts inside the house, or a tighter house.

PATH 2

Performance path

A computer model shows the house will use less energy than the code's own model house. No credit list.

PATH 3 · OFTEN THE SIMPLEST

HERS score path

The house earns an energy score, and the score has to be **55 or lower**. Today's limit is 70. The code calls it the Energy Rating Index, or ERI.

Why builders like the HERS score path

- **One number.** A HERS Rater models your plans and gives you the score before you build.
- **Room to trade.** A better heat pump or tighter ducts can make up for other choices, within limits the code sets.
- **No credit list.** Homes on this path skip the efficiency credits.
- **Fewer surprises.** You know the house passes on paper before the first wall goes up.

The house still gets its blower door and duct tests, and a few must-do items still apply. With solar counted, the score limit is 38.

How Auburn Blower Door helps

- **Plan consulting, for a fee.** We review your plans, model the HERS score, and tell you the simplest path for each plan and what it takes. Ask us for a quote.
- We test the ducts at rough-in, the easiest time to fix leaks.
- We do the final blower door test and the fresh-air flow test.
- You get signed test reports for your building official.

More than 1,000 Alabama homes HERS rated and ENERGY STAR certified.

Which code applies to my job?

The new state code applies to residential construction beginning January 1, 2027. The rule does not say whether that means the permit date or the day work starts. A city or county building code already in force before then stays until that city or county changes it. Ask your building department which code your 2027 jobs fall under, or call us and we will help.

Three things to do before 2027

1
Ask your building department which code your 2027 jobs fall under.

2
Hire us to review your plans. For a fee, we find the simplest path for each plan.

3
Book your tests early: ducts at rough-in, then the final tests.

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Call or text (334) 246-1363

A plain-language summary for planning. It is not legal or code advice. Sources: Alabama Home Builders Licensure Board Rule Chapter 465-X-10 (the 2024 IRC and 2024 IECC with Alabama amendments) and today's Alabama code (the 2015 IECC with Alabama amendments). Your building official makes the final call, including which code applies. Version 2, November 2026.