



**HRV/ERV Code Primer**

**Background:** Requirements for DUV in multifamily dwelling units in the Code that lead to HRV/ERV installations are primarily established by two ICC codes – the IMC and IECC. A combination of both codes (IECC setting building envelope air tightness requirements, and IMC setting DUV requirements for tight dwelling units) is often needed for the code to require all homes and dwelling units to install a DUV system – a requirement that could be met by an HRV/ERV.

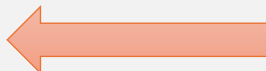
With this requirement established, the IMC provides specific requirements related to ventilation airflow, ducting, terminations, and components. The IECC provides specific requirements for energy recovery, fan efficacy, and air flow verification. This fact sheet provides guidance on how to find DUV system design and installation requirements that are relevant to HRVs/ERVs. Note that upon adoption, state and local jurisdictions may amend the code, or adopt different IMC and IECC code editions that will change the interaction between the codes on these issues.

**IMC**

**IECC (See Separate Fact Sheet)**

IMC Requirement for DUV for Tight Dwelling Units

IECC Building Envelope Air Tightness Requirements Drive DUV Requirements in IMC



Ventilation System Design

HRV/ERV Requirements (when applicable)



Ventilation System Air Flow  
Duct Design  
Components  
Exhaust and Intake Openings

Fan Efficacy Requirements (varies based on ventilation system)



Verification of Airflow

State and Local Code Amendments May Alter This Interaction





**Other Outdoor Air Requirements**

Requirements that may apply to mid/high rise dwelling units depending on system design:

- ❖ Zone air flow adjustments IMC 403.3.1.1.1
- ❖ System airflow requirement IMC 403.3.1.1.2
- ❖ Exhaust contribution to required outdoor airflow IMC 403.3.1.2
- ❖ System operation via demand control IMC 403.3.1.3
- ❖ Variable air volume controls IMC 403.3.1.4

Requirements that apply to low-rise dwelling units:

- ❖ IMC 403.3.2.2 Corridors and common spaces flow rate = 0.06 CFM per ft<sup>2</sup> of floor area (may be relevant depending on common space ventilation system)
- ❖ IMC 403.3.2.4 When provided in dwelling unit, controls include text or symbol indicating systems function
- ❖ IMC 403.3.2.5 Exhaust or outdoor air equipment listed and labeled: ANSI/AMCA 210-ANSI/ASHRAE 51

Note: HVI 916 also references ANSI/AMCA 210-ANSI/ASHRAE 51

**Dwelling Units in Mid/High-Rise Multifamily Buildings: Local Exhaust Flow Rates Table 403.3.1.1**

| Local Exhaust Rates | Bathroom | Kitchen |
|---------------------|----------|---------|
| Continuous          | 20 CFM   | 25 CFM  |
| Intermittent        | 50 CFM   | 100 CFM |

Note: may be relevant to HRV/ERV tied to local exhaust

**Dwelling Units in Low-rise: Local Exhaust Flow Rates Table 403.3.2.3**

| Local Exhaust Rates | Bathroom | Kitchen |
|---------------------|----------|---------|
| Continuous          | 20 CFM   | 25 CFM  |
| Intermittent        | 50 CFM   | 100 CFM |

Note: may be relevant to HRV/ERV tied to local exhaust

Recommended Resource: See HVI CPD for certified air flow ratings

**Mechanical Inspections IMC 107.2**

Rough-in inspection

- After roof, framing, fire blocking and bracing are in place
- Prior to installation of wall or ceiling membranes
- All ducting and other components to be concealed are complete

Final Inspection

- Upon completion of mechanical system

**Maintenance of Mechanical Systems IMC 102.3**

Mechanical systems shall be maintained

- Proper operating condition
- In accordance with original design
- Safe and sanitary condition
- Maintained in accordance with requirements of code edition under which system was installed.
- Owner is responsible
- Building department can require reinspection
- Maintenance inspection in accordance with ASHRAE/ACCA/ANSI Standard 180

**Requirements Specific to Energy Recovery located in section 514 for exhaust systems:**

**IMC 514.1** General ERV (and HRV) Requirements

- Where required for energy conservation, ERVs shall meet requirements of IECC
- Ducted HRVs listed and labeled in accordance with UL 1812
- Nonducted HRVs listed and labeled in accordance with UL 1815

**IMC 514.2** ERV (and HRV) Prohibited Applications (*except ERVs that recover sensible heat only using coil-type heat exchanger*)

- Hazardous waste exhaust systems (per IMC 510)
- Dust, stock, and refuse systems that convey explosive or flammable vapors, fumes, or dust
- Smoke control systems (per IMC 513)
- Type I or II hood commercial kitchen exhaust
- Clothes dryer systems (per IMC 504)

Note: these are not common HRV/ERV applications in residential dwelling units



## Requirements for Ventilation System Components, Installation, and Design that Apply to HRV/ERV in Addition to Other Ventilation Systems

| Exhaust Openings and Terminations IMC 501.3, 501.3.1   |  | Intake Openings (mechanical and gravity) IMC 401.4   |  | Recirculation of Air IMC 403.2.1, IMC 514.4   |  |
|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| Where discharge will cause a public nuisance   |  | <10 ft from lot lines or buildings on the same lot line  |  | Recirculation to meet required air flow rates   |  |
| Where discharge can readily be drawn in again by a ventilation system                                |  | < 10 ft horizontally from any hazardous or noxious contaminant   |  | Recirculated from one dwelling to another   |  |
| < 3 ft from property line  |  | <i>Examples: vents, streets, alleys, parking lots, loading docks</i>   |  | Recirculation to dissimilar occupancies   |  |
| Exhausted into an attic, crawl space, or directed onto walkways                                      |  |  |  | Recirculation of air from kitchens to other spaces  |  |
| < 3 ft from operable openings  |  | < 10 ft horizontal separation from streets, alleys, parking lots, loading docks AND $\geq$ 25 ft vertical separation |  | Exhaust and supply cross leakage between air streams < 10% of airflow design capacity is not considered recirculated  |  |
| < 10 ft from mechanical air intakes  |  |  |  |   |  |
| In flood hazard area, location at or above required elevation in IBC 1612                            |  | In flood hazard area, location at or above required elevation in IBC 1612  |  | Recirculation of air from garages common for multiple dwelling units to other spaces  |  |
| Kitchen exhaust openings meet requirements of IMC 506.3.13, 506.4, or 506.5 depending on system type |  | Intake openings < 10 ft of contaminant source $\geq$ 3 ft below contaminant source                                   |  | Transfer air from occupiable space may serve as makeup air for required exhaust systems (kitchens, baths, toilets) if transfer and exhaust air is sufficient to meet required flow rate (except when recirculation from a specific space is prohibited) (IMC 403.2.2) |  |

**Protection for exhaust and intake openings terminating outdoors IMC 401.5, 501.3.2**

- Corrosion-resistant screens, louvres or grilles
  - $1/4"$  (6mm)  $\leq$  screen/louvre/grille openings  $\leq 1/2"$  (13mm)
- Protected against local weather conditions
- Louvres protecting openings in hurricane-prone regions (defined in IBC) comply with AMCA 550
- Meet protective requirements of IBC for exterior wall openings

Note: requirements for exhaust openings and terminations as well as intake openings are applicable to HRV/ERV exhaust and supply components. Bathroom, toilet room and kitchen exhaust information is included for situations in which HRV/ERV may be integrated with these ventilation systems

Recommended Resource: see HVI CPD for information on certified duct termination fittings, fresh air inlets, and static vents

**Duct Requirements for Ventilation Systems:**

- Air Movement in egress IMC (601.2)
  - Makeup air in corridor for exhaust systems permitted only if outdoor air provided to corridor > makeup air taken
  - Corridors within dwelling units not prohibited as makeup air
- Ductwork for exit enclosure ventilation must meet applicable requirements of IMC 601.3
  - Note: exit enclosure is typically a common exit with fire separation from other spaces and intended as part of egress.
- Exhaust ducts under positive pressure may not pass through ducts or plenums (IMC 601.4)
- Return air openings (IMC 601.5)
  - Openings located  $\geq 10$  ft from open combustion chamber or draft hood of another appliance in same room
  - Not taken from hazardous or insanitary location or refrigeration room (as defined by IMC)
  - Return air taken from any room  $\leq$  outside air flow rate supplied
  - Return/transfer openings sized in accordance with manufacturer's installation instructions, ACCA Manual D or registered design professional
  - Not discharged from one dwelling into another
  - No direct connection to return air of forced air furnace from crawl space
  - Not taken from closet, bathroom, toilet room, kitchen, garage, boiler room, furnace room or unconditioned attic
  - Not taken from indoor swimming pool enclosures and associated deck areas
  - Return air may be taken from kitchen where return air serves the kitchen and opening  $\geq 10$ ft from cooking appliances
- Ventilation plenums meet location requirements of IMC 602.1

Note: duct requirements above are also applicable to heating and cooling ducts. Some requirements are designed for heating and cooling ducts but may apply to ventilation ducts depending on the situation. Many of these requirements will not be relevant to HRV/ERV serving single dwelling units.

**Important Resources**

- ❖ HVI CPD <https://www.hvi.org/hvi-certified-products-directory/>
- ❖ ASHRAE Read-Only Standards <https://www.ashrae.org/technical-resources/standards-and-guidelines/read-only-versions-of-ashrae-standards>
- ❖ ICC Codes <https://codes.iccsafe.org/> for actual code text and other codes referenced throughout IMC
- ❖ State and/or Local Code Adoption Information – check with your state and/or local building department for adopted code edition and any amendments. Depending on the AHJ, requirements may be significantly amended from ICC published code

**Fact Sheet Acronyms**

ACCA = Air Conditioning Contractors of America  
 ACH = Air Changes per Hour  
 AHJ = Authority Having Jurisdiction  
 ANSI = American National Standards Institute  
 AMCA = Air Movement and Control Association  
 ASHRAE = American Society of Heating, Refrigerating, and Air-Conditioning Engineers  
 CFM = Cubic Feet per Minute  
 CPD = Certified Products Directory  
 DUV = Dwelling Unit Ventilation  
 ERV = Energy Recovery Ventilator  
 Ft = Feet  
 HRV = Heat Recovery Ventilator  
 HVI = Home Ventilating Institute  
 IBC = International Building Code  
 ICC = International Code Council  
 IECC = International Energy Conservation Code  
 IMC = International Mechanical Code  
 IRC = International Mechanical Code  
 UL = Underwriters Laboratories