

# What to Expect with Philly's Building Tune-Up Law

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## Introduction

With Philadelphia's Building Energy Performance Program website going live it's a great time to revisit the "Building Tune-Ups" policy in order to review the basic requirements, address concerns, and provide building owners with general insight and expectations.



Philadelphia's Tune-Up law falls into a new category of energy policy referred to as a Building Performance Standard (BPS). A BPS policy enables cities to influence long-term energy and environmental impacts of buildings by regulating operational energy performance as opposed to simply design and construction. The application of this type of policy varies, but the overall goal of influencing buildings well into their life-cycle remains the same and remains extremely impactful as we work to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions at a local level.

Philly's BPS policy mandates a "tune-up" of existing buildings which entails an inspection of existing building systems by a "qualified tune-up specialist" as well as corrective action to address all low-hanging energy efficiency upgrades. This policy will not require capital-intensive upgrades and is only intended to capture the no-brainer low- and no-cost energy efficiency upgrades.

## Q & A

Below are a few common questions and answers to address the big-ticket items related to the policy:

### Is compliance mandatory?

*YES, if your building is  $\geq 50,000$  SF and a required commercial building type.*

### Which building types are required to comply?

*Most commercial buildings except parking lots/garages and non-transient lodging (multifamily, dorms, etc)*

### What is the deadline?

*Deadlines are based on building size and will run in 5 year cycles.*

The first cycle is as follows:

- September 30th, 2021 for buildings  $>200,000$  SF
- September 30th, 2022 for 100,000 – 200,000 SF
- September 30th, 2023 for buildings 70,000 – 100,000 SF
- September 30th, 2024 for buildings 50,000 – 70,000 SF.

### And what if I don't comply?

*\$2,000 initial fine + \$500 per day after day 30.*

### What types of upgrades will be required?

*No-cost repairs - Yes.  
Low-cost repairs - Yes.  
Investment-Grade upgrades - No.*

### Who can make the upgrades?

*The inspection requires a qualified specialist, but upgrades can be implemented by facility staff.*



## Are there exemptions?

Yes, exemptions are available if the building has pursued other high-performance benchmarking, certifications, or retrofits. See the policy website for specific details.

- Plant loop setpoint adjustments (hot, chilled, and condenser water systems) – **no cost**
- Temperature reset sequences (air- and water-side systems) – **low cost**
- Pipe insulation – **low cost**

## Domestic Hot Water

- Water temperature setpoint adjustments – **no cost**
- Storage tank & piping insulation – **low cost**

## Conclusion

This tune-up policy is in full effect and we're within a year of the first tiered deadline. This should not be viewed as a burden on owners, but rather as an opportunity to reduce operating costs with minimal capital, improve the value of your building, and mitigate the environmental and financial impacts of greenhouse gas



## Case Study - Typical Tune-Up Scenario

This policy has, expectedly, received push-back and hesitation from some building owners; largely driven by uncertainty and the fledgling nature of BPS policies. In order to address this apprehension, a scenario has been provided below of what a retrofit may look like for a typical office building. The measures will not pose a financial burden on owner. Instead, they will yield immediate reductions in operating costs with very good or immediate ROIs. Each measure has been designated as low- or no-cost though there may be some variability based on the specific building configuration.

**Building Type:** Office, Multi-tenant

### Common Low Cost Upgrades:

#### Operation

- Operating hour adjustments (e.g. weekend hours, amenity areas) – **no cost**

#### Lighting

- LED lighting retrofits (non-tenant areas) – **low cost**
- De-lamping overlit areas – **no cost**

#### HVAC

- Thermostat setpoint adjustments & setbacks – **no cost**

