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Which Projects are Exempt from using an H-QUITO Certified HVAC Contractor?

The DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program frequently receives inquiries about the need for qualifying projects to use an HVAC contractor who is certified by an H-QUITO¹. The DOE Zero Energy Ready Home program incorporates all of the ENERGY STAR Homes provisions. While commissioning is important for all HVAC systems, Versions 3 and 3.1 of the ENERGY STAR program are focused on using a credentialed contractor to properly commission *the most common* heating and cooling system types. Accordingly, the ENERGY STAR Homes requirement to use a credentialed HVAC contractor also includes some important exemptions, as called out by the ENERGY STAR HVAC checklists. These are summarized below.

Note: in the discussion below we refer to the provisions and terminology found in ENERGY STAR Homes Revision **08**, released in June 2015. The same key conclusions presented below also apply to projects covered by the ENERGY STAR Homes Revision 07.

In ENERGY STAR Revision 08, the Rater is required to verify that the HVAC contractor holds the appropriate quality credential to complete the HVAC Commissioning Checklist, ***unless all equipment to be installed in the home is an exempted type***. This provision is item 1.2 within the Rater Design Review Checklist, which is shown below along with the corresponding footnote.

1. Partnership Status	Must Correct	Rater ¹ Verified
1.1 Rater has verified that builder is an ENERGY STAR partner using energystar.gov/partnerlocator	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1.2 Rater has verified that HVAC contractor holds credential required to complete the HVAC Commissioning Checklist, unless all equipment to be installed in home to be certified is an exempted type, in which case check "N/A" ² <input type="checkbox"/> N/A HVAC Contractor Company Name: <input type="text"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. HVAC contractors must be credentialed by an EPA-recognized HVAC Quality Installation Training and Oversight Organization (H-QUITO) if a split air conditioner, unitary air conditioner, air-source heat pump, or water-source (i.e. geothermal) heat pump up to 65 kBtuh with a forced-air distribution system (i.e., ducts) or a furnace up to 225 kBtuh with a forced-air distribution system (i.e., ducts) will be installed in the home to be certified. For all other permutations of equipment (e.g., boilers, mini-split / multi-split systems) and distribution systems, a credential is not required. An explanation of this credentialing process and links to H-QUITOS, which maintain lists of credentialed contractors, can be found at energystar.gov/newhomeshvac.

¹ "H-QUITO" is an acronym for an EPA-recognized HVAC Quality Installation Training and Oversight Organization (HQUITO). An explanation of this credentialing process and links to H-QUITOS, which maintain lists of credentialed contractors, can be found at www.energystar.gov/newhomesHVAC.



Therefore, if a home is being certified under ENERGY STAR Homes and DOE Zero Energy Ready Home and uses heating/cooling systems comprised only of boilers or mini / multi-splits, an H-QUITO certified HVAC contractor is not required.

Examples of projects when the H-QUITO certified HVAC contractor is / is not required are shown in the table below.

Project Scenarios when an H-QUITO Certified HVAC Contractor is / is not Required		
Heating System	Cooling System	H-QUITO Certified HVAC Contractor Required?
Mini-split (ductless)	Mini-split (ductless)	No
Mini-split (ducted – any length)	Mini-split (ducted – any length)	No
Air-source heat pump as primary system; mini-split serving a bonus room	Air-source heat pump as primary system; mini-split serving a bonus room	Yes
Boiler-fed, in-floor hydronic	None	No
Boiler-fed, in-floor hydronic	Split-system A/C, 3 ton	Yes
Hybrid air-source heat pump with gas furnace back-up	Air-source heat pump	Yes

Note that the application of the H-QUITO certified HVAC contractor requirement is not affected by the type or design of the Whole House Mechanical Ventilation (WHMV) system for the home. The WHMV system is addressed in the ENERGY STAR HVAC Design Report, and is not addressed in the HVAC Commissioning Checklist.

Conclusions:

1. Depending on the type of heating and cooling equipment being used, projects may be exempt from the requirement to use an H-QUITO certified HVAC Contractor based on the ENERGY STAR Homes requirements.
2. Projects which are not required to use a credentialed HVAC contractor may still qualify for both ENERGY STAR Homes and DOE Zero Energy Ready Home, assuming that all other program requirements are met.