



*People Helping People  
Build a Safer World™*

## FACT SHEET

**About Us:** The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states that adopt codes choose the International Codes, building safety codes developed by the International Code Council.

**Websites:** [www.iccsafe.org](http://www.iccsafe.org); [www.buildingsafetyweek.org](http://www.buildingsafetyweek.org)

**Membership:** International Code Council members include state, county and municipal code enforcement and fire officials, architects, engineers, builders, contractors, elected officials, manufacturers and others in the construction industry. The International Code Council has more than 300 chapters. Each chapter has its own personality and focus, representing all International Code Council member professional disciplines.

**I-Codes:** The International Codes, or I-Codes, published by the International Code Council, provide minimum safeguards for people at home, at school and in the workplace. The I-Codes are a complete set of comprehensive, coordinated building safety and fire prevention codes. Building codes benefit public safety and support the industry's need for one set of codes without regional limitations.

**I-Code Users:** Fifty states and the District of Columbia have adopted the I-Codes at the state or jurisdictional level. Federal agencies including the Architect of the Capitol, General Services Administration, National Park Service, Department of State, U.S. Forest Service and the Veterans Administration also enforce the I-Codes. The Department of Defense references the *International Building Code* for constructing military facilities, including those that house our troops, around the world and at home. Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands enforce one or more of the I-Codes.

**Building Green:** Strong, durable buildings that are safe and affordable have a smaller impact on the world's limited resources. The Code Council is committed to educating its members on green building and participating in activities with other organizations that assure green building

practices are sustainable and safe. The Code Council advocates for green building in the legislative, regulatory and codes arenas, [www.iccsafe.org/news/green](http://www.iccsafe.org/news/green).

**Building Code History:** For thousands of years, building codes and regulations have protected the public. The earliest known code of law—the Code of Hammurabi, king of the Babylonian Empire, written in 2200 B.C.—assessed severe penalties, including death, if a building was not constructed safely. The regulation of building construction in the United States dates back to the 1700s. By the early-1900s special interest groups, such as the insurance industry, joined others with similar concerns to develop a model code. This first model building code gained widespread popularity among legislative authorities. It provided an accessible source of comprehensive technical requirements without the difficulties and expense of investigation, research and drafting of individual local codes.

**How a Code Becomes Law:** Legislative bodies are not obligated to adopt model building safety or fire prevention codes, and may write their own code or portions of a code. A model code has no legal standing until it is adopted as law by a legislative body (state legislature, county board, city council, etc.). When adopted as law, all owners of property within the boundaries of the adopting jurisdiction are required to comply with the referred codes. Because codes are updated, existing structures usually are required to meet the code that was enforced when the property was built. The primary application of a building code is to regulate new construction. Building codes usually only apply to an existing building if the building undergoes reconstruction, rehabilitation or alteration, or if the occupancy of the existing building changes to a new occupancy as defined by the building code.

**Model Building Code Advantages:** The purpose of a building code is to establish minimum requirements necessary to provide safety, guard public health and reduce property losses. Model building codes provide protection from man-made and natural disasters. Safe buildings are achieved through proper design and construction practices in concert with a code administration program that ensures compliance. Model codes actually keep construction costs down by establishing uniformity in the construction industry. This uniformity allows building and materials manufacturers to do business on a larger scale—statewide, regionally, nationally or internationally. Larger scale allows cost savings to be passed on to the consumer. Codes also help protect real estate investments, commercial and personal, by providing a minimum level of construction quality and safety.

**International Code Council Code Development Process:** The International Code Council uses the governmental consensus process to develop its building safety and fire prevention codes. It is an open, inclusive process that allows input from all individuals and groups. Committees hear all code change proposals. An appeals process allows anyone to appeal an action or inaction of a code committee. Final decisions are made by International Code Council voting members—code

enforcement and fire officials who, with no vested interests beyond public safety, represent the public's best interest.

**Technical Support:** The International Code Council provides free code opinions to all International Code Council members. Annually, the Code Council responds to more than 60,000 requests for code opinions by phone and 5,000 informal written requests. The Code Council also performs comprehensive plan reviews of private and public sector projects for local and state governments, architects and engineers. The Council offers in-person technical consulting where designers meet with International Code Council technical staff to create plans and specs, analyze design options, evaluate specific code sections and provide guidance on code compliance. The International Code Council technical experts include architects; civil, fire protection, mechanical and plumbing engineers; energy conservation experts and accessibility specialists.

**Educational Support:** The International Code Council offers code-related training for all segments of the construction industry. The International Code Council delivers open enrollment, in-person seminars, customized seminars, on-line training, audio virtual seminars, an on-line degree program and educational support materials from workbooks to videos.

**Certification:** The International Code Council offers a wide array of examinations to test professional knowledge of code enforcement and construction. For code professionals, examinations cover building, electrical, mechanical and plumbing inspection, permitting and plans approval. For contractors, examinations cover practical applications required for licensure.

**International Services:** Architects, engineers and developers around the world often reference the International Codes. Examples include Macau, United Arab Emirates and Qatar. The International Code Council consults with Mexico to develop a residential building code; assists Egypt to establish training, certification and laboratory accreditation programs; and works with Pakistan to improve its seismic requirements. The Council translated its I-Codes into Spanish and is assisting with the translation of ASTM standards into Spanish. The International Code Council has international chapters in Canada, New Zealand and Kenya.

**ICC-Evaluation Service:** ICC-ES is a nonprofit, public-benefit corporation that performs technical evaluations of building products, components, methods and materials. The evaluation process culminates with the issuance of reports on code compliance. ICC-ES reports are available free on the Internet. [www.icc-es.org](http://www.icc-es.org).

**International Accreditation Service:** IAS accredits testing and calibration laboratories, inspection agencies, building departments, fabricator inspection programs and *International Building Code* special inspection agencies. A recognized accreditation body since 1975, IAS is a nonprofit, public benefit corporation. IAS is one of the leading accreditation bodies in the United

States and a signatory to several international mutual recognition arrangements (MRAs), [www.iasonline.org](http://www.iasonline.org).

**International Code Council Foundation:** ICCF is dedicated to changing the devastating effects of natural disasters and other building tragedies by promoting ideas, methods and technologies that encourage the construction of durable, sustainable buildings and homes, [www.icc-foundation.org](http://www.icc-foundation.org).

**International Code Council Supporters:** The Alliance to Save Energy; American Institute of Architects; American Institute of Building Design; American Planning Association; American Seniors Housing Association; Associated General Contractors, Alabama Branch; Boeing Company; Building Codes Assistance Project; Building Component Manufacturer Conference; Building Owners and Managers Association; City of Garden Grove; Eastern States Building Officials Federation; Federal Alliance for Safe Homes; Institute for Business & Home Safety; Insurance Building Code Coalition; International Association of Fire Chiefs; International City/County Management Association; Missouri Association of Building Officials; National Apartment Association; National Association of Home Builders; National Association of Industrial and Office Properties; National Association of State Fire Marshals; National Council of Architectural Registration Boards; National Multi Housing Council; Northwest Wall and Ceiling Bureau; Responsible Energy Codes Alliance; Steel Truss and Component Industry; Structural Building Components; Structural Component Distributors Association; Tennessee Building Official Association; Texas Municipal League; The Model Building Code Initiative; U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development; U.S. Department of Defense; U.S. Department of Energy; United States Hispanic Contractors Association; Washington State Association of Fire Marshals; Western Wall and Ceiling Contractors Association; Window and Door Manufacturers Association; WTCA—Representing the Structural Building Component Industry.