



NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Apr. 5, 2005
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World Trade Center 9/11 investigation could result in new generation of building safety and fire prevention codes

The nation's leading developer of building safety and fire prevention codes will use findings from an investigation into the World Trade Center attack to better understand what led to the towers' collapse and develop construction guidelines to better protect lives and property.

The International Code Council will use its code development process to address building safety and fire prevention code issues raised in the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) findings from its World Trade Center investigation.

"NIST has done an important public service by conducting this comprehensive study," said International Code Council CEO James Lee Witt. "The International Code Council intends to fully review its findings as it strives to continue to improve building safety and protect lives and property."

International Code Council members last year approved a change to the International Building Code (IBC) related to the World Trade Center collapse. The IBC now requires that buildings 420 feet and higher have a minimum three-hour structural fire-resistance rating. The previous requirement was two hours. The change provides increased fire resistance for the structural system leading to enhanced tenability of the structure and gives firefighters additional protection while fighting a fire. The IBC establishes minimum standards for the design and construction of building systems. It addresses issues such as use and occupancy, entry and exit during emergencies, engineering practices and construction technology.

The International Code Council updates its codes every three years through a governmental consensus process. Proposed code changes and comments on the proposals are accepted from anyone and everyone in public hearings. However, the final decision on code changes rests in the hands of the International Code Council's governmental members, building and fire officials, who have no vested interest other than public safety.

As a result of the World Trade Center attacks and proposed code changes to address terrorism-related issues in the built environment, the International Code Council formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Terrorism Resistant Buildings. The committee—made up of code officials, engineers, architects and other building professionals—will look at the NIST report and its forthcoming recommendations, and other research.

(MORE)

The International Code Council also participates in an American Society of Mechanical Engineers task force to investigate the use of elevators in fires and other emergencies. This group began meeting following the World Trade Center attacks to examine the use of elevators for occupant exit and firefighter entry into burning buildings.

In the late-19th century, the United States enacted the first set of building regulations because of widespread property losses caused by fire. By the early 1900s, code enforcement officials were writing codes for their individual communities. These codes, which were often inconsistent from town to town, led to the need for model building codes that could be used all across America and around the world.

“Historically, major advances in building safety and fire prevention codes have been the result of lessons learned from past events,” said Witt. “While no code can eliminate all risks, what we learn from the past does save lives and better protect property in the future.”

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 developed by the International Code Council.

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