



NEWS RELEASE

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Contacts: Jennifer Gibson
1-888-ICC-SAFE (422-7233), ext. 4224
Steve Dagers, ext. 4212 or (708) 351-8880 (cell)

Building Safety Week survey identifies likely code violations

While code officials, designers and contractors work as a team to build the safest homes and buildings possible, a new survey identifies the most commonly found code violations.

In new homes, consumers should look out for structural and framing problems, and make sure grading, foundation, footings and fire blocking passed inspection. The International Code Council 2005 Building Safety Week (May 8-14) survey also urges paying close attention to stairs and handrails.

The most common code violations found in new homes, according to the survey, relate to structural issues and wood framing. The problems ranged from inadequate fastening to improperly sized beams, studs and floor joists.

Similar problems were identified in existing homes along with electrical and fire safety dangers, according to the more than 400 code officials across the country who participated in the survey. Potential dangers with stairs and handrails also surfaced in new and existing homes. One concern is improper construction of handrails where the spacing between spindles is so wide that infants can get their heads caught, or fall through the opening.

“We should never be satisfied when it comes to safety,” said International Code Council CEO James Lee Witt, former Director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. “Our objective is to improve public safety by alerting consumers to possible dangers with the hope that an educated consumer will ask their local code officials, designers and contractors the right questions that will lead to the safest structures possible.”

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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Survey identifies likely code violations/Add One

The Council's nationwide survey is preliminary research for a comprehensive national survey—a joint venture with the National Association of Home Builders—to examine ways to improve building safety in America.

Inspections during construction identify and require correction of building safety and fire prevention code violations.

“This survey illustrates why codes and inspections are so important to save lives and protect property,” Witt said. “When a new home is built inspectors will visit the work site several times to make sure the foundation is constructed properly, the framing and other structural elements are secure, mechanical and electrical systems are installed correctly, and the home is ready for occupancy.”

Dangerous, but easily corrected, code violations identified by the survey in existing homes are broken or improperly installed smoke detectors. The survey also identified electrical problems, most notably shorted or dead outlets and missing electrical junction box covers, as dangers to look for in existing homes.

“It is so important that proper precautions are taken to alert occupants, especially children, of a fire and prevent injuries from electric shock,” Witt said. “Missing electrical box covers and malfunctioning outlets are fire hazards. They become even more dangerous when the home doesn't have working smoke detectors.”

The survey also looked at dangers in new and existing buildings. Structural and framing problems along with permit violations topped the list of code violations in new buildings. Inadequate exit signs, obstructed exits or disconnected fire alarm systems were the most noted violations in existing buildings. According to the survey, fire sprinklers are required in most new buildings being built, but not in most new homes.

The goal of Building Safety Week, sponsored by the International Code Council Foundation, is to raise awareness about the importance of building safety and fire prevention in the built environment. For more information and to download free home safety brochures, visit www.icc-foundation.org/news/bsw.html and click on “Keeping Your Family Safe.”

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