

Introduction to the Code Council's Regulatory Publications and Support Documents

The International Code Council produces a variety of publications that assist communities and the building industry in providing safe, sustainable, and resilient buildings and communities. This document outlines the different types of documents, their method of development and their typical uses.

CODES

The International Codes (or I-Codes) are a coordinated set of model codes that provide requirements for the design, construction, operation, and maintenance of new and existing buildings. In general, the I-Codes are developed using a governmental-consensus process as outlined in [Council Policy 28](#). The International Energy Conservation Code recently shifted to a standards development process as outlined below but it is still an I-Code.

The I-Codes are used in a variety of ways in both the public and private sectors. Many national, state and local governments adopt the I-Codes to apply to some or all the buildings in their jurisdiction. The I-Codes can also be used in a variety of non-regulatory settings including:

- Voluntary compliance programs;
- The insurance industry, to estimate and manage risk, and as a tool in underwriting and rate decisions;
- Certification and credentialing of individuals involved in the fields of building design, construction and safety;
- Certification of building and construction-related products;
- To guide construction in government-owned properties;
- Facilities management;
- “Best practices” benchmarks for designers and builders, including for projects in jurisdictions that do not have a formal regulatory system or a governmental enforcement mechanism;
- College, university and professional school textbooks and curricula; and
- Reference works related to building design and construction.

Learn more about the code development process [here](#).

STANDARDS

The Code Council uses [Consensus Procedures](#) approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and [Council Policy 12](#) to develop a growing suite of standards. Standards provide technical criteria on a specific topic that can be incorporated into a code or used on its own. Development committees made up of representatives from a diversity of interest categories are responsible for the development of the standard. The [standards development process](#) relies on public submissions and review of drafts to capture feedback.

GUIDELINES

Guidelines are developed on topics where there is a need for additional clarity, but which may not need a standard. Guideline content is generally written in non-mandatory language and thus intended for educational purposes and not for adoption although guidelines may contain appendices with recommended code language. ICC guideline development is conducted consistent with [Council Policy 33](#) where a Guideline Development Committee of interested parties is seated to develop content which is submitted for public comment.

MODEL PROGRAMS

Model programs are staff or contractor developed documents that capture best practices from the industry on a specific topic. They are informed by practitioners but do not undergo a formalized consensus process. Model programs are intended to identify key considerations, practices, and solutions for establishment and administration of programs on the covered topic.

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RESOURCES

The Code Council Board of Directors approved the creation of resources to supplement the technical criteria provided in codes and standards. This material is not considered part of the codes or standards it builds upon, but rather a source of additional material. Resources can be either educational or include sample code language to address a specific topic of interest (or both). Resources are typically developed with input from interested parties, but the final content does not necessarily represent industry consensus.

ACCEPTANCE CRITERIA (ICC-ES)

ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) develops Acceptance Criteria for innovative products not specifically addressed in the building codes. This allows ICC-ES to evaluate such products to assure compliance with approved requirements. The Acceptance Criteria are developed through a transparent process involving public hearings of the ICC-ES Evaluation Committee, which is comprised of government representatives.

ACCREDITATION CRITERIA (IAS)

Accreditation is offered by the International Accreditation Service and is typically in accordance with a national/ or international standard, code or AHJ requirements.

Accreditation Criteria set the requirements for obtaining accreditation and provide guidance on implementing performance features of the applicable code or standards referenced. Accreditation criteria is developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the IAS Accreditation Committee.

CODE COMMENTARIES

Code commentaries are developed as companions to most of the I-Codes providing users with details on sections of the code including illustrations, potential methods of compliance and potential consequences of failure to comply with the section. These details are generally based on the reason statements and other backup material provided by the original code change proponent, interpretation requests that may warrant additional explanation of the section to avoid ongoing confusion, and the experiences of recognized code officials and building safety professionals.

CODE INTERPRETATIONS

The Architectural & Engineering Services staff provide useful guidance in the form of both verbal and written opinions on the interpretation of the I-Codes. The official position of the Code Council on certain matters of interpretation are developed and posted by ICC Interpretations Committees.

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