



ICC NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

January 17, 2020

www.iccsafe.org

Contact: Madison Neal

(202) 754-1173

mneal@iccsafe.org

FEMA strengthens construction standards for disaster recovery

The Agency updates its Recovery Interim Policy Consensus-Based Codes, Specifications and Standards for Public Assistance, which leverages the International Codes to mitigate against risks from wildfire and other natural hazards

Washington, D.C. – The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) released an update, on December 20, 2019, to its Recovery Interim Policy FP-104-009-11, *Consensus-Based Codes, Specifications and Standards for Public Assistance (Policy)*, Version 2.1, adding several International Codes (I-Codes), developed by the International Code Council, to the list of required *Consensus-Based Codes, Specifications and Standards*. The I-Codes requirements aim to advance national resiliency and reduce community risk before and after a disaster.

The Public Assistance (PA) Program is FEMA’s largest grant program averaging \$4.7 billion in assistance each year to state and local governments and certain private nonprofit organizations. Through the PA program, following a federal declaration, FEMA offers grants to eligible communities for debris removal, life-saving emergency protective measures, and the repair, replacement, or restoration of disaster-damaged publicly-owned facilities and infrastructure to respond and recover from major disasters.

The damage caused by wildfires in both California and Australia as well as the aftermath of the recent earthquakes in Puerto Rico underscore the importance of this updated Policy. The Policy’s updates will require, for the first time, that construction adhere to the latest International Wildland Urban Interface Code, which requires ignition resistant construction in fire prone areas; the International Mechanical Code and International Fuel Gas Code, which require mechanical gas and electrical connections be tied down so as not to sever during seismic events; and the International Plumbing Code, which includes provisions to keep piping intact following seismic events, prevent erosion following flooding, and ensure rain loads do not exceed roof carrying capacities.

The Policy will specify that the I-Codes will be required for federally supported construction of buildings and structures that support electric power, potable water and wastewater infrastructure. This approach mirrors that taken by the Code Council’s Alliance for National and Community Resilience, which encourages resilience across key systems to better prepare communities against potential hazards. The updated Policy also requires construction adhere to several additional I-Codes and Standards and continues to require the current editions of the International Building Code, International Residential Code and International Existing Building Code.

According to the interim Policy, FEMA is utilizing the I-Codes as minimum standards for post-disaster construction to increase the resilience of communities after a disaster, protect lives and property, and reduce future vulnerability of disaster-damaged facilities and the need for future federal disaster recovery funding. Studies consistently endorse the adoption and implementation of current building codes as one of the strongest defenses against natural disasters and a cost-effective method for protecting important community functions including homes and businesses. The congressionally-established National Institute of Building Sciences found that up to date model building codes save \$11 for every \$1 invested through earthquake, flood, and wind mitigation benefits, with a \$4 to \$1 wildfire mitigation benefit.

“We believe that implementation of this policy will contribute to increased resiliency of communities, protect lives and property, and support the efficient use of federal public assistance dollars,” said Keith Turi, Assistant Administrator for the FEMA Recovery Directorate.

“We applaud the work of FEMA to strengthen federal policy and encourage the use of current codes,” said Code Council Chief Executive Officer Dominic Sims, CBO. “These updated policy guidelines ensure that we build back stronger to better protect our families and communities.”

Click [here](#) to read the policy.

###

About the International Code Council

The [International Code Council](#) is a nonprofit association that provides a wide range of building safety solutions including product evaluation, accreditation, certification, codification and training. It develops model codes and standards used worldwide to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures.