ICC NEWS RELEASE

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Building codes save lives in massive Alaskan earthquake

A 7.0 magnitude earthquake that rattled through Southcentral Alaska on November 30 underlined the effectiveness of the I-Codes in protecting lives and property

Washington, D.C. – A massive 7.0 magnitude earthquake that hit Anchorage, Alaska, on November 30 highlights the importance of building codes in saving lives, protecting property and contributing to a rapid post-disaster recovery. These results are consistent with several studies that demonstrate that well-enforced building codes help mitigate earthquake risk. The Alaska earthquake did not result in any collapsed buildings, widespread damage to infrastructure or loss of life, partially due to the strong building codes the state adopts – the International Codes (I-Codes).

The I-Codes, developed by the International Code Council, are a family of modern, comprehensive and coordinated building codes used in all 50 states, in federal buildings and in many other countries around the world. They are updated regularly and take into account the latest technology and advancements in building science. In the aftermath of the Alaska earthquake, state and federal leaders are speaking out about the importance of strong building codes.

Anchorage Mayor Ethan Berkowitz credited building codes for minimizing structural damage and said, "Considering the scale of [the November 30th] earthquake, the extent of damage was relatively small."

After assessing the minor damage to his own home, Governor Bill Walker praised the state's building codes and said, "Building codes mean something."

U.S. Senator Lisa Murkowski stated, "We have worked as communities in our state to be prepared for disasters when they should come. We have some of the most stringent building codes in the world, and for the most part, our buildings held up."

U.S. Senator Dan Sullivan said, "We were fortunate that there were no deaths…Given how many earthquakes we have had over the years, we have learned a lot. The first thing we learned is about building codes. Fortunately--again, thank God--we had no buildings collapse. We have a lot of structures--homes, businesses, schools--that have severe structural damage, but a collapsing building is where you get a lot of deaths…Strong, strict building codes…[help] to prevent that."

Additional information:

- For earthquake safety and recovery resources, click here.

- Building Community Resilience through Modern Model Building Codes by the Code Council and the Alliance for National and Community Resilience
- Natural Hazard Mitigation Saves: 2017 Interim Report by the National Institute of Building Sciences

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About the International Code Council

The International Code Council is a member-focused association. It is dedicated to developing model codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes.