

**Oral Statement Presented to the
Advisory Committee on Structural Safety
of Department of Veterans Affairs Facilities
U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs**

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Good morning. My name is Sara Yerkes and I am the Director of Government Relations for the International Code Council (ICC)®.

ICC commends the Department of Veterans Affairs on the important project it is about to undertake to review the International Building Code®. I appreciate the opportunity to provide these brief comments this morning.

ICC is a not-for-profit organization whose goals are to safeguard public health, safety and welfare in the built environment; enhance economic development through the utilization of state-of-the-art technology in materials research, design and construction practices; to reduce hazards to the public in buildings and structures; to streamline the building regulatory system through a single family of codes that brings consistency and compatibility to multiple layers of requirements existing at the international, federal, state and local levels; and to advance innovation through performance-based provisions that require consistent and predictable levels of building performance and safety.

The members of ICC and its partners are associations of municipalities, counties, state governments, territorial or other governments, and US Federal agencies involved in construction regulatory functions. Our membership consists of approximately 50,000 individuals, 9,000 cities, 50 states, and more than 80 trade and professional organizations.

Model building codes have been developed and enforced in the United States since the early 1900s. Today, the U.S. enjoys the highest standard of building safety in the world. This is a result of more than 190 years of collective experience and accomplishments by the International Code Council (ICC) and its three statutory founders, the Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA); the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO); and the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). In 1994 these three organizations formed the ICC. The goal of ICC was to unify the building regulatory system nationwide.

In 1999, the ICC achieved its goal in developing the International Codes, a single family of codes that is quickly being adopted across the country. This unified system will stimulate the building economy, improve safety in the built environment and create more efficient and more durable homes and buildings. Presently the family of International Codes™ includes building, energy conservation, fire, fuel, mechanical, plumbing, property maintenance, private sewage disposal, residential building, a performance code, urban-wildland interface, zoning codes, and an existing building code.

According to a survey conducted by the Federal Trade Commission approximately 97% of the cities, counties and states that have adopted and are enforcing building and safety codes are using documents developed by the statutory members of ICC. To date the International Building Code has been adopted in 36 states, 18 are statewide adoptions, and the other 18 are local adoptions. Three other states are going through their legislative process to adopt the IBC: Arkansas, Minnesota and Virginia. In addition, the US Department of Defense has done an in-depth review of the IBC and is recommending that it be used as the basis for the Unified Federal Design and Construction Plan.

The ICC uses a governmental consensus process to develop its codes. The governmental process meets all the principles of voluntary consensus standards as defined by the OMB A-119 Circular and by the National Standards Strategy: openness, balance of interest, due process, appeals process and consensus.

ICC meetings are open to the public and the results of the meetings are available for public review and comment.

All public views and opinions are taken into consideration during the ICC code development process. The committee members represent general interests including consumers, code officials, other government regulatory agencies; user interests including academia, building owners, design professionals, insurance companies and producer interests, builders, contractors, manufacturers, and testing laboratories. To ensure fair representation, a minimum of one third of all members of each committee has to be made up of code officials from all disciplines.

The public interest, in the largest sense of the phrase, is the business of the constituent members of the ICC. Divested of any potential financial benefit in the outcome of the code, the governmental consensus process is able to listen to all of the arguments industry representatives put forth surrounding an issue and vote their consciences in the pursuit of sound public policy and public safety to better serve our communities.

ICC has more than 360 qualified staff members at 18 offices throughout the United States to provide support for the International Codes. ICC offers certification, product evaluation, technical, educational and informational products and services.

Public Law 100-678, “Public Buildings Amendments Act of 1988” law requires federal agencies to follow nationally recognized model building codes, consider local building, zoning and similar laws and give due consideration to recommendations made by local officials. Thanks to the efforts of ICC to provide a coordinated and comprehensive set of building codes this law has become easier to implement and as states are updating their building regulations by adopting the International Codes.

In summary, as the Department of Veterans Affairs ponders what code to adopt, ICC urges you to take these facts presented to you into consideration:

- ICC has 190 years of collective experience in developing model building codes.
- The International Codes are being adopted all across the U.S.
- By adopting the IBC, the Department of Veterans Affairs will be providing the uniformity demanded by the engineers, architects, and code officials across the country.
- The IBC is a tried and proven document.
- The ICC code development process encourages all interested parties to participate.
- Only ICC can provide complete support to a building code through licensing, product evaluation, certification, technical and informational services.
- Please visit the ICC website at www.intlcode.org to view the jurisdictions that have already adopted the International Codes.

Thank you for your time and attention. I would be happy to provide this Commission with any additional information you may require.