



NEWS RELEASE

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Public Safety Wins with New Storm Shelter, Safe Room Construction Standard

A new set of construction guidelines will increase public safety for people evacuated to storm shelters and those who use safe rooms in their homes during hurricanes and tornados.

The International Code Council/National Storm Shelter Association (NSSA) Standard for the Design and Construction of Storm Shelters, approved by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as an American National Standard, offers new guidelines for community shelters and residential safe rooms. It also consolidates previous references published by NSSA, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Red Cross. One feature of the new standard increases minimum wind resistance requirements in the event of rare but strong storms.

“The Storm Shelter Standard is a tool to help communities protect their residents from disasters,” said Code Council CEO Rick Weiland. “But in so many communities, there simply aren’t enough resources for building safety. You can adopt codes and standards, but if you don’t have trained people on the ground to ensure compliance and provide support, it doesn’t matter.”

A federal legislative effort, the Community Building Code Administration Grant Act (CBCAG), is underway to create a grant program through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to jurisdictions that seek to ramp-up local building and fire code administration capabilities. The CBCAG passed the U.S. House of Representatives and is under consideration in the Senate.

“First Preventers, those many unheralded and mostly unknown code officials who check and double-check code compliance and administer building safety codes play a major role in saving lives, protecting property and reducing recovery costs often paid for by taxpayer dollars,” Weiland said. “They need support to protect the public they serve.”

The Storm Shelter Standard is expected to be published in September for communities to adopt. It also will be considered as a referenced standard included in the 2009 *International Building and Residential Codes* when Code Council holds its Final Action Code Development Hearings in Minneapolis Sept. 17-23.

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 choose the International Codes, building safety codes developed by the International Code Council.

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