



ICC NEWS RELEASE

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World Toilet Day Takes the Taboo Out of Discussing Critical Sanitation Issues

Approximately 1.8 million people die each year from sanitation-related illnesses. Unfortunately, lack of access to proper sanitation for the 40% of the world's population without toilets is literally a matter of life and death. This annual death rate is more than for those who die from AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. The water and sanitation crisis has claimed more lives than all the wars of the 20th century combined. Saddest of all is that most of these casualties are children. Yet, even with such tragic statistics, talking about toilets and sanitation remains an issue many have felt uncomfortable discussing.

In 2001, the World Toilet Organization (WTO) and 16 other toilet organizations around the world declared November 19 as World Toilet Day to begin to change people's attitude and encourage discussion of sanitation concerns. A highly-engaged partner in many of the WTO's initiatives to improve sanitation and safe drinking water worldwide, the International Code Council (ICC) is proud to support the World Toilet Organization's campaign. Over the years, an ever-growing number of people and countries plan various public activities in a concerted effort to dramatically raise awareness of the global sanitation crisis. In fact, UNICEF recently joined these organizations by also declaring this date an official day of recognition of this crisis.

"Personal sanitation and hygiene is something most Americans are embarrassed to talk about," said Jay Peters, Executive Director for the ICC's Plumbing, Mechanical and Fuel gas (PMG) Group. "World Toilet Day draws attention to the issues in a way that compels us to address them." World Toilet Day is also hailed as a day where everyone can take part in a "Big Squat." This purposeful title is presented in a direct but humorous way to lighten the

discomfort many cultures have with discussing the topic openly. People around the world are asked to squat in public for one minute in support of World Toilet Day, driving home the point "where would you go?" and how people without toilets are forced to go in public places. Participants are encouraged to notify local media to attend, and to upload a photo of "[Big Squat](#)" participants to encourage others to join.

Continuing to expand the talk about toilets, the Code Council and WTO are working with worldwide industry experts representing sanitation-related organizations around the globe on a new document, called the "*Global Guideline to Practical Toilet Design*," that will standardize the design and installation of public toilets for virtually any country in a way that is easily to adopt and follow. This Guideline will facilitate clean, convenient, hygienic and safe public toilet facilities, as well as offering guidance on basic care and maintenance. The Guideline will, not only reduces costs, but may enable installations in areas where previously they might not have been affordable.

The Code Council also began a "Safe Water" initiative in 2008 to call attention to the startling statistics caused by improper sanitation and impure water. "Every 15 seconds... a child dies from a waterborne-related disease. Safe drinking water is unavailable to 1.1 billion people. Over 40% of people have no access to toilets. As we now know, something virtually everyone in the U.S. takes for granted is a huge issue in many undeveloped countries.

Schools, businesses, organizations and others are coordinating efforts as simple as distributing information to showing sanitation crisis-related films. The goal of every effort is to raise awareness and get people to become intrigued enough, and comfortable enough, to hopefully ask what the significance really is of "World Toilet Day." The Code Council urges everyone to learn more about the global sanitation crisis and get involved to help to improve the lives of billions of people around the world.

For more information on World Toilet Day, visit www.worldtoilet.org/wtd. To learn more about the Code Council's global sanitation efforts, contact the PMG Resource Center at 1-888-ICC-SAFE, x4PMG or pmgresourcecenter@iccsafe.org.

The International Code Council (ICC) publishes building safety, fire prevention and energy efficiency codes that are used in the construction of residential and commercial buildings.

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