ICC NEWS RELEASE

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ICC, ASHE to Develop Code Changes for Hospitals, Medical Care Facilities

Initiative expected to reduce conflicts with overlapping requirements, consider cost-effectiveness, and increase opportunity to apply science, research, modeling and historical data

The International Code Council (ICC) and the American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) of the American Hospital Association (AHA) are collaborating to develop a series of building code changes that will result in safe, effective and efficient provisions for hospital and ambulatory care facilities.

"Including stakeholders in a consensus-driven approach within the Code Council's public and transparent code development process is a formula for success and safety," ICC CEO Richard P. Weiland said. "Together we can create broad-based, model codes that consider affordability and meet the needs of hospitals and other health care facilities without sacrificing safety."

The joint effort, according to both organizations, aims to:

- reduce conflicts caused by overlapping local and federal building and fire code requirements that can arise when constructing medical facilities;
- ease the confusion between multiple authorities responsible for code enforcement of health care structures;

- create comprehensive building and fire codes for the design and construction of new hospitals and ambulatory care facilities;
- consistent code evaluation of existing health facilities;
- increase the opportunity to apply science, research, modeling and historical data in the code development process; and
- consider cost-effective construction alternatives which do not reduce current levels of safety.

"The members of the American Society for Healthcare Engineering and the American Hospital Association are committed to providing safe and efficient health care facilities," ASHE Deputy Director, Douglas S. Erickson said. "Our members dedicate countless financial and human resources to assure fire and building codes and standards are continuously met in our facilities. There comes a time however when the value of continuously increasing fire and building code requirements has a diminishing return on investment, and that time is now."

As part of its commitment to this collaboration, the ICC Board has approved the creation of a 15-person Ad Hoc Committee on Health Care (http://www.iccsafe.org/cs/AHC/Pages/default.aspx) to review and update provisions in the International Codes that impact the construction of new and existing hospitals and ambulatory care facilities. The objective of the committee is to develop code change proposals to the International Codes that will result in the most contemporary, effective, efficient and cost-effective provisions for health care facilities to assure the highest level of safety for patients, employees and other users.

For the past two decades the fire and life-safety risk in hospitals has been drastically reduced so a patient's risk of harm from these uncommon events is almost zero. The reduction happened for a number of reasons including a ban on smoking in hospitals, better construction techniques, installation of Quick Response Sprinkler technology in new construction and major renovations, and a continued diligence in training health care personnel in fire safety. Every dollar a hospital spends on redundant codes is a dollar that is drawn away from direct patient care, according to Erickson.

About ASHE

The American Society for Healthcare Engineering (ASHE) is a personal membership group of the American Hospital Association (AHA). ASHE represents a diverse network of 10,000 members dedicated to optimizing the health care physical environment. For information about ASHE, please visit www.ashe.org or call 312-422-3800.

About ICC

The International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety, fire prevention and energy efficiency, 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. The International Codes also serve as the basis for construction of federal properties around the world, and as a reference for many nations outside the United States.

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