



The Big Picture

ICC Code Development Process

More than two years of participation on an ICC committee has yielded a plethora of positive results for the industry.

by Kirk Grundahl

There was a period of time in WTCA's history where we were relying on other industry organizations to monitor and provide code changes affecting our industry. It was not until the 2003 IBC and IRC came out that it became clear that this was a strategic mistake and we needed to get actively engaged in this process. We did so by stepping in, working hard with Dave Brakeman (Alpine Engineered Products), Steve Cabler (MiTek Industries), Dave Gromala (Weyerhaeuser), Dave Tyree (American Forest & Paper Association) and Ed Huston (Smith & Huston Inc. and the National Council of Structural Engineers Association) to correct an error in the way bottom chord live loads were to be interpreted. The work we did turned into a successful code change at the final action hearings in May 2004. This was just the beginning.

We then applied for committee membership within the code development cycle and were selected to become part of the IBC Structural Committee. Having participated on the committee for nearly two years, I can say that the code change and hearing process is a pretty straightforward concept, yet it has a significant degree of complexity when you consider all the varied interests involved. As such, it is vitally important for our industry to be involved. There is a new edition of all the model codes adopted every three years, with code supplements produced between editions. The first edition was in 2000 with the following schedule taking place subsequently:

1. 2003 Edition
2. 2004 Supplement—developed during the 2003/2004 Cycle
3. 2006 Edition—developed during the 2004/2005 Cycle
4. 2007 Supplement—to be developed during the 2006/2007 Cycle
5. 2009 Edition—to be developed during the 2008/2009 Cycle
6. The edition and supplement cycles continue

Each cycle is for a period of 18 months and the following generally occurs within a cycle:

1. A deadline for proposed code changes is published. An announcement is posted on the ICC website and other media. Anyone can submit a code change.
2. The ICC staff review all proposed code changes and ensure that they are in a standardized legislative format. All proposals must be based on current code text.
3. The proposed changes are published on the ICC website approximately 90 days prior to hearing and in print form approximately 60 days prior to hearing.
4. Approximately six months after the proposed code change deadline, the first public hearing is held. This hearing is where code change proponents advocate before each of the ICC code change committees (i.e., the IBC Structural Committee). The committee listens to testimony and then votes on the code change.
5. Once that hearing is completed, the results are tabulated and published approximately 60 days later and 45 days after that any public comments on the code changes that were made are due.
6. These comments are published approximately 60 days prior to the final action hearing.

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at a glance

- ❑ WTCA no longer relies on outside organizations to monitor code changes that affect component manufacturers and their suppliers.
- ❑ Since 2004, WTCA has occupied a spot on the IBC's Structural Committee. This group reviews and votes on several hundred code change proposals in each 18-month cycle.
- ❑ By participating in the IBC structural committee, WTCA has developed favorable relationships with members of the forest products industry, the steel industry, homebuilders, structural engineer groups and building code officials.



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7. The final action hearings, which are before the ICC member assembly, are held approximately six to eight months after the committee hearings.

In the 2007 supplement cycle, the committee hearings were held from September 20 through October 1, 2006, and the final action hearings will be held May 21-26, 2007, in Rochester, NY.

A Day in the Life

So what is it like to be an IBC Structural Committee member? It takes an amazing amount of work. With respect to the 2006 Edition, the IBC Structural Committee alone listened to roughly 260 change proposals. At the most recent hearings this was reduced to roughly 160. Prior to the hearings we review all the code changes that we will vote on so we have the background needed to make a wise assessment. To put a hearing day in perspective here is how it works:

1. Proponents of the change each have two minutes to advocate for the change. There is no limit to the number of people permitted to state their opinion on the change.
2. Then opponents of the change each have two minutes to define why they believe the change is not ready for prime time.
3. Then the proponents each have one minute to rebut the opponent's arguments.
4. Then the opponents each have one minute to rebut the opponent's rebuttal.
5. Then the committee makes a motion to approve the change as submitted, provided there is not a floor modification or a committee modification (in this case, the motion may be to approve the change as modified). Or the motion may be to disapprove everything.

Anyone who desires to have a voice in the process can testify, and there is no cost to attend. The final vote on all code changes rests with the "Active" Governmental Members at the final action hearing. These are the people who enforce the code and are charged with protecting the public's safety.

By being much more intimately involved in the process, one of the things you learn quickly is that it is best to have a united message in front of the committee and at the final action hearings. This means working with all interested parties in the section of code that one desires to change and craft language that meets the best interests of building construction first and foremost and then tends to the perspectives of all interests.

We have been very fortunate to establish very good relationships within this code change process. These include:

1. Ed Huston, John Hooper, Jim Robinson, Stephanie Young, Norm Scheel, Phil Brazil and John Grenier, structural engi-

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neers who are very involved with the National Council of Structural Engineers Association.

2. Dave Gromala, Sam Francis, Phil Line, Dave Tyree, Dennis Pitts, and Ed Keith, who are involved representing the forest products industry, which is a very important supplier group.
3. Jonathan Humble, Jay Larson, Hank Martin, Mark Miller and Robert Hackworth who are involved representing the steel industry, another key supplier group.
4. Ray Kothe, Ed Sutton, Jeff Inks and Gary Ehrlich who are involved representing the home building industry, a critical customer group.
5. Randy Shackelford, Steve Pryor and Shane Vilasineekul who represent Simpson Strong-Tie.
6. Jay Crandall, Greg Bergtold and Lorraine Ross who represent the foam sheathing producers.
7. Eric Stafford who represents the Institute for Business & Home Safety (IBHS).
8. Dan Dolan who represents the academic community.
9. Building officials Joe Hill (State of New York), Wayne Jewell (State of Michigan), Dan Kelsey (State of Minnesota), Bob Boyer, Mo Madani and Tom Allen (State of Florida), and Don LeBrun (State of Indiana).

It is very clear to us that the more we work in concert with anyone interested in the same code provisions and changes, the more positive progress we are going to make, because all points of view are taken into account as the code change is developed. Over the next few years our code involvement process will become more robust as we continue to work inside our industry's technical groups—TPI TAC and WTCA's Engineering and Technology Committee and integrate the voices of all of our relationships on key issues that affect us all.

We have found that immersing ourselves in the building code process is an extremely important industry activity because the code touches multiple aspects of our business in both overt and very subtle ways. Having a pulse on the changes that are taking place within the regulatory and technical environments helps us navigate forward much more quickly and effectively. **SBC**

Kirk Grundahl is WTCA's Executive Director. If you have questions or comments regarding the issues discussed in this new column, email kgrundahl@qualtim.com.

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6300 Enterprise Lane • Suite 200 • Madison, WI 53719
608/310-6706 phone • 608/271-7006 fax
www.sbcmag.info • admgr@sbcmag.info