



Getting Involved with Standards and Codes

By Brooks Baker

“There are those who go through life content to be a spectator on the sideline, just going to work every day doing the ‘same old – same old.’ Others look on each day as an opportunity to make a difference.”

When I was hired at the University of Alabama at Birmingham back in 1979, I went to work for Phillip Mann, a great man who was a philosopher as well as an engineer and manager. His method of teaching was often with parables or word pictures that made his point in a way that made it stick in your mind. One day he and I were having a conversation, the subject of which I do not recall, but I clearly recall the “word picture” which he used to help me understand I may not be as important as I thought. Phil said in his slow, Alabama drawl: “Brooks, for most people, employment is like sticking your hand in a bucket of water. When you pull your hand out, there is no sign it was ever there.” Phil accomplished his goal and motivated me to think about things with the goal of long-term, positive impact. Not just “same old – same old.”

LEAVING A LASTING LEGACY

In every organization, there are individuals who excel at keeping things on an even keel, and the status quo. Then there are those with a vision of something bigger. We are fortunate to have a number of APPA members and partners who have seen the value of taking on a challenge which is very different from, although significantly impacting, our profession. They have chosen to add the role of professionals to their repertoire, thus shaping the very fabric of

our industry. And as a result, will leave a longer lasting legacy. Those people comprise the **APPA Standards and Codes Council (ASCC)**. This team of individuals works behind the scenes with colleagues across the country, and also internationally, to shape the standards and codes that regulate the construction and ongoing operations of our educational facilities.

The APPA Codes Advocacy Initiative started about a decade ago, and has played a significant role in shaping standards and codes since that time. Several APPA members have been heavily involved for decades in standards and codes, because they and their institutions understood the huge financial and operational impact of those regulations on their institutions.

The mission of the council as approved by the APPA Board in 2012 is to:

- **EDUCATE** APPA member institutions;
- Determine the **IMPACT** of existing and proposed standards and codes;
- **INFLUENCE** standards and code development processes and establish educational facilities standards;
- Display APPA’s **LEADERSHIP** on standards and codes; and
- Identify broad **CONSENSUS** among APPA’s institutional members, and seek appropriate representation in standards bodies at local, state, national, and international levels.

HOW IT WORKS

The ASCC is made up of at least one member from each APPA Region, a chair and other ad hoc members as needed. The members currently serving on the Council are:

Brooks Baker, Chair

Michael Anthony, University of Michigan

Richard Davis, Evergreen State University

David Handwork, Arkansas State University

Clint Lord, Arizona State University

Dana Peterson, University of New Hampshire

Alan Sactor, University of Maryland, College Park

Theodore Weidner, Facility Asset Consulting

John Bernhards, APPA Associate Vice President

The Council has frequent teleconferences to determine priorities and to develop action plans to make code modifications favorable to higher education, or assuring unfavorable changes are not approved. There are many code actions each week which are triaged and evaluated for a need to pursue action on APPA’s behalf. The successes of the council are significant and some examples of recent standards and code “wins” follow:

- NFPA 70: Arc-Flash is now an OSHA hazard rather than NEC

- Reduction in Fire Pump Testing Water Wasted
- Reduction in the “oversizing” of Transformers
- NFPA 70: Approval for using Aluminum Wiring if desired
- Fire Alarm Technician requirements avoided
- NFPA 25: Fire Pump No Flow Test frequency reduced to monthly from weekly
- ASHRAE 90.1: Assisted in effort to keep this as new construction and not O&M code
- Smaller Electrical Rooms
- NFPA 72: Change multiple locations of fire alarm resets to a single reset point

Michael Anthony of the University of Michigan has estimated the financial impact of APPA’s code advocacy efforts at about 2 percent of the total construction value of a new building. This means that for a building with a construction cost of \$100 million, an institution taking advantage of all of the positive code changes could avoid approximately \$2 million in first cost—with no reduction in safety or functionality!

The volume of revisions to existing standards and codes is sometimes overwhelming, and new standards and codes are being created at an ever-increasing rate. Some of the more notable new standards and codes are related to sustainability and energy. The council is keeping a watchful eye on the major energy conservation and sustainability codes that are currently active.

MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Would you like to “Make a Difference” in your institution and profession which will have a lasting impact? Having influence and impact on standards and codes seems like a daunting task, but our ASCC team can assist with guidance for anyone who would like to help. There are several options for involvement ranging from writing or commenting on proposals to membership on the actual code committees.

You can have a lasting impact and avoid being like that hand in a bucket of water. Get involved with the APPA Standards and Codes Council and make a difference. If you have individuals in your organization that could assist, encourage THEM to take advantage of the opportunity for professional growth, as

well as making a positive impact on the industry. ☎

Brooks Baker is an emeritus APPA member and a past APPA President based in Warrior, AL. He chairs APPA’s Standards and Codes Council and can be reached at bbiii@live.com.



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