

APPA “I Codes” Work Group Responds to Proposed Changes to ICC Fire, Energy Conservation Codes

By Dana Peterson, AIA

The APPA ICC or “I Codes” Work Group, working under the APPA Standards and Codes Council (ASCC), has been actively reviewing and considering proposed changes for the 2018 editions of the International Fire Code (IFC) and the International Energy Conservation Code (IECC). Once formally adopted by the authoring body, the International Code Council (ICC), these model codes editions are commonly adopted or upgraded by states and municipalities as their legally binding building and/or property use codes within the period of a few years.

THE PROCESS

The Work Group began its efforts in fall 2015 by soliciting input from APPA members regarding changes they would like to see in the IFC and IECC when slated for review in 2016. As no change requests were received, the group then turned its attention to reviewing changes to both codes proposed by other groups. With the assistance of Koffel Associates, the ASCC’s consultant, the Work Group boiled down over 300 proposed Fire Code changes and over 200 proposed Energy Code changes to 38 and 31 changes, respectively, which it felt had the greatest potential impact on educational institutions. Over the course of three lengthy conference calls during March and April, and much reading, internal research, and discussion, the Work Group cast its votes to arrive at 9 proposals it believed APPA should support, 17 it felt should be opposed, and taking a neutral position on the balance. The Work Group then forwarded its recommendations to the ASCC, which ratified the recommendations with minor revisions on April 14, 2016.

Our consultant then took the 26 directives on APPA’s behalf to the ICC’s Committee Action Hearings held in late April in Louisville, Kentucky, and

presented APPA’s support or opposition to the particular proposed code changes as applicable. Of the 26 APPA positions, the ICC Technical Committee voted in concurrence with APPA on 17 of them.

The ASCC asked the Work Group to reevaluate the remaining nine items that did not go APPA’s way, and assess whether ASCC should accept the ICC Technical Committee’s findings or seek to submit a public comment on behalf of APPA to continue our support or opposition as applicable. On May 16, the Work Group voted to recommend continued opposition to two of the nine proposals remaining in disagreement.

One of the remaining proposals opposed by APPA restricts the use of less expensive sprinkler systems that comply with NFPA 13R. The Work Group felt this would significantly increase mid-rise construction costs and expose facilities in northern climates to greater risk of flooding from frozen sprinkler pipes, all for only a marginal benefit in property damage reduction and no documentable improvement to life safety.

The second proposal mandates the installation of separate fire suppression systems over domestic ranges in residence halls. The Work Group felt that although this change might result in a more immediate reaction to a common cause of fire response calls in student housing, it was redundant overkill to other equally effective measures like portable extinguishers and sprinklers. The ongoing annual cost for maintenance, inspection, and testing of these systems in addition to the initial capital cost was also a concern.

The ASCC approved the recommendations the week of May 23; the comments will be considered and the issue decided when ICC voting members cast their ballots this fall.

THE WORK GROUP

A listing of the 26 directives and positions of the Work Group are found on the APPA website

at www.appa.org/standards_icode.cfm. The ICC Work Group comprises facilities staff members from APPA member institutions and organizations who volunteer their time to participate through scheduled conference calls. In particular, it is important to recognize the following institutions that provided input during the IFC and IECC Group B review:

- California State University Stanislaus
- Cleveland State University
- The Evergreen State College

- Linfield College
- Pennsylvania State University
- Rutgers University
- University of Houston Downtown
- University of Michigan
- University of New Hampshire (chair)
- Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc. (ex-officio business partner)

With assistance provided by:

- William Koffel, *Koffel Associates*
- John Bernhards, *APPA Associate Vice President*
- Billie Zidek, *APPA Standards and Codes Administrator*

No Group C codes will be reviewed by APPA I-Codes Work Group next year, as the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) is now taking over the maintenance of much of the International Green Construction Code (IgCC). The I-Codes Work Group will engage again in 2017, when the ICC's Group A codes cycle begins and public comment is sought for the International Building Code, the International Plumbing Code, and other established ICC codes.

The ASCC welcomes all APPA member institutions to participate on future I-Codes Work Groups and other existing APPA codes work groups. Your engagement in the Council's successful Work Group process and consensus-building effort provides a voice for educational institutions in facilities-related codes and standards development activities in the ICC, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), and elsewhere. ☎

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To participate in future meetings of the ICC I-Codes Work Group, and other APPA Codes Work Groups, contact Billie Zidek, APPA's standards and codes administrator, at billie@appa.org.

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