

What Has APPA Done For You Lately?

By Theodore J. Weidner, Ph.D., PE, AIA, CEFP, DBIA

What has APPA done for you lately? There are a lot of things happening in the foreground that are seen with regularity, this magazine, and some in the background, often unseen unless identified. The challenge with many things that APPA does for its members are either plainly obvious or surprisingly hidden. This bimodal distribution of benefits is somewhat typical of organizations that are highly dependent on volunteers. This column will focus on the hidden things that have a very big effect on educational facilities and APPA members.

The APPA Standards and Codes Council (ASCC) comprises six volunteers having recently lost one member to retirement; we wish him well. These volunteers, with the help of APPA staff, monitor developments in building codes, watching for items that will affect APPA member institutions. They also support and sometimes participate in the development of new codes or standards. It's important work that can have hidden implications into how a facilities organization plans for new or renovated facilities and responds to daily events.

Several of the ASCC members are members of other organizations that are more heavily involved with Standards Development Organizations (SDO). Standards, which become codes through a formal, legislative adoption process typically performed at the state level, affect all APPA members. Building codes address issues of: fire safety (warning, resistance, and occupant egress), health and safety, and, more recently, energy efficiency. These codes are generally reviewed, revised, and updated on a three-year cycle and due to the number of codes there is something happening every year.

An ASCC member generally chairs a group of volunteers who review changes to building codes such as the International Construction Code (ICC), and related documents that govern how architects and

engineers design buildings for our campuses. Most recently, Dana Peterson led a review of proposed changes to the ICC Group A codes, those codes address fire exits, plumbing, and HVAC systems. The proposed code changes ranged from topics that addressed a widespread issue or something an individual felt was important to highlight. Two items proposed to require the owner to be responsible for fire prevention at a construction site and maintain a 24-hour watch. Discussion centered around standard contract language, who controls the site, and whether fire protection is really an owner responsibility when means and methods are a contractor responsibility. APPA has coordinated comments on these proposals.

Rich Davis, recently retired from Evergreen College, chaired a group reviewing changes to NFPA 70 (the National Electrical Code) and conducted a survey to see if due to broad-based efforts to increase the energy efficiency of lighting and other electricity-consuming devices meant that existing codes resulted in over-sizing electric service and thus increased first costs to buildings as well as increasing arc-flash hazards. While the results did not have an immediate effect on code requirements we provided valuable information that may lead to changes in future.

As a group, ASCC members responded quickly to a new code NFPA 3000: Standard for an Active Shooter/Hostile Event Response (ASHER) Program. Since Columbine and Virginia Tech, educational facilities have been faced with a new hazard, active shooters. Several organizations initiated practice drills but many have not. NFPA 3000 attempts to fill a void. However, the initial draft of NFPA 3000 required a live practice drill for every building, every year, with building occupants. While a practice drill every year might work well for a single K-12 school building, when there's a college campus that

may have 30 buildings or more, there isn't enough time in the year, month, or week to plan or execute the initial requirement for practice drills. APPA members provided over one-third of the comments to the draft standard and helped shape it so it could provide meaningful awareness and preparation for the campus and occupants. The standard was released to the public in March this year in a much more manageable form, and ASCC sponsored a presentation at the APPA Annual Conference in August.

The ASCC initiated webinars this year to provide educational opportunities to approximately 2,000 attendees about different issues related to codes and safety. Based on the attendance, the webinars are a hit; they will continue. ASCC members are eager to hear suggestions of topics for future webinars.

The ASCC has supported efforts to become an SDO and a dedicated team of experts drafting a standard for Total Cost of Ownership (TCO). Last year, APPA 1000 was approved! The work continues with folks working on guidance to implement TCO. It's a big effort with over 20 people providing input under Ana Thieme and Deke Smith's leadership.

In summary, the ASCC has made connections throughout the codes and standards industry. We have helped make APPA and its members valued and valuable sources of information for the built environment. As operators, and builders of large and diverse facilities, we have an opportunity to create meaningful influence on the industry. It's a unique and challenging opportunity and all ASCC members are happy to contribute. The work is rewarding for everyone in APPA whether contributing through volunteer efforts or taking advantage of the results.

I encourage all APPA members to think about how they can contribute either through their expertise or time. Sometimes there is no recognition, other times the recognition is between colleagues. The volunteer

opportunities that APPA has are wide and important. Think about it. Volunteer. 💪

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