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**Say “Goodbye” to the  
Standard Building Code (SBC),  
Uniform Building Code (UBC), and the  
BOCA National Building Code**

**Say “Hello” to the  
International Building Code (IBC)**

- |                   |                       |                    |
|-------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| ● Means of Egress | ● Accessibility       | ● Ramps            |
| ● Stairways       | ● Handrails           | ● Guardrails       |
| ● Landings        | ● Change in Elevation | ● Tripping Hazards |
| ● Headroom        | ● Doorway Thresholds  | ● Illumination     |

**Building Codes and Fall Prevention**

For decades, the major regional building codes have been used to evaluate the safety of various building components making up the primary elements of *means of egress* to include stairways, ramps, small changes of elevation, and level surfaces.

However, the last Standard Building Code (SBC) was published in 1999, the last Uniform Building Code (UBC) was published in 1997, and the last BOCA National Building Code was published in 1999.

**The International Code Council (ICC)**

In the years to come, as cities and states throughout the United States routinely up-grade their building codes, they will have no choice but to adopt the new International Building Code (IBC) that was first published in 2000, the code

promulgated by the combined efforts of the code organizations that published the *old* codes.

The International Code Council (ICC) was established in 1994 as a nonprofit organization dedicated to developing a single set of comprehensive and coordinated national model construction codes. The founders of the ICC are Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc. (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), and Southern Building Code Congress International, Inc. (SBCCI). Since the early part of the last century, these nonprofit organizations developed the three separate sets of model codes used throughout the United States. Although regional code development has been effective and responsive to our country’s needs, the time came for a single set of codes. The nation’s three model code groups responded by creating the International Code Council and by developing new codes without regional limitations.

According to the ICC, there are substantial advantages in combining the efforts of the existing code organizations to produce a single set of codes. Code enforcement officials, architects, engineers, designers and contractors can now work with a consistent set of requirements throughout the United States.

To date, the ICC has developed and made available an impressive inventory of International Codes, including:

- International Building Code
- International Energy Conservation Code
- International Fire Code
- International Fuel Gas Code
- International Mechanical Code
- International Plumbing Code
- International Private Sewage Disposal Code
- International Property Maintenance Code
- International Residential Code
- International Zoning Code

### **A Brief History of National Building Code Organizations**

The **Standard Building Code (SBC)** is published by the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI). Headquartered in Birmingham, Alabama, the SBCCI is a not-for-profit organization whose primary mission since 1940 has been to develop and maintain a set of model building codes. These codes are intended to be adopted by reference as local and state laws governing construction.

The original governmental membership of 40 southern cities has grown to more than 2,500 city, county, state and provincial governments and agencies in the United States and other countries. In addition, individual membership in the organization includes more than 14,000 engineers, architects, homebuilders, contractors, trade associations, and manufacturers.

The *Standard Building Code* (originally titled the *Southern Standard Building Code*) is predominantly a **Southeastern** United States code. In addition to its headquarters in

Birmingham, Alabama, the SBCCI has regional offices in Greenville, South Carolina (the Eastern Regional Office), Longwood, Florida (the Southeast Regional Office), and Austin, Texas (the Southwest Regional Office).

Most cities in Louisiana as well as many cities in Texas (including Beaumont, Orange, Port Arthur, Texas City, Corpus Christi, Galveston, Texas City, Palestine, Longview, Bryan, and College Station) have adopted the *Standard Building Code*.

The **Uniform Building Code (UBC)** is published by the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), headquartered in Whittier, California. The founding purpose of the ICBO in 1922 was the development of a building code that all communities could accept (adopt by reference) and enforce. The first edition of the *Uniform Building Code* was published in 1927.

The ICBO is a not-for-profit service organization dedicated to public safety in the built environment through development and promotion of uniform codes and standards, enhancement of professionalism in code administration, and facilitation of acceptance of innovative building products and systems. In it, the purpose of the ICBO to provide services regarding product evaluation, education, plan review, and code consultation and interpretation.

The *Uniform Building Code* is predominantly a **Western** and **North Central** United States code. In addition to its headquarters in Whittier California, the ICBO has regional offices in Pleasanton, California (Western Region), Carmel, Indiana (Northeast Region), Gladstone, Missouri (Central Region), Austin, Texas (Southern Region), and Bellevue, Washington (Northwest Region).

New Mexico as well as many cities in Texas (including Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and San Antonio) have adopted the *Uniform Building Code*.

The **BOCA National Building Code** (BOCA/National or simply BOCA) is published by the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) International, and headquartered in Country Club Hills, Illinois. Founded in 1915, Building Officials and Code Administrators International, is a nonprofit membership association, comprised of more than 16,000 members who span the building community, from code enforcement officials to materials manufacturers. BOCA is dedicated to preserving the public health, safety and welfare in the built environment through the effective use and enforcement of various model codes responsive to the latest advancements in construction technology.

The *BOCA/National Building Code* is predominantly a **North Central** and **North Eastern** United States code. In addition to its headquarters in Country Club Hills, Illinois, BOCA has regional offices in Westerville, Ohio (Midwest Office), Tulsa, Oklahoma, (Southwest Office), Trevese, Pennsylvania (Eastern Office), and Latham, New York (Northeast Office).

#### **Other Major Codes, Standards, and Regulations Addressing Means of Egress:**

##### **Life Safety Code (NFPA 101)**

The Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) is published by the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA), headquartered in Quincy, Massachusetts. The NFPA is an international, nonprofit, membership organization founded in 1896. Today, NFPA's membership totals more than 69,000 individuals from around the world and more than 80 national trade and professional organizations.

The mission of NFPA is to reduce the worldwide burden of fire and other hazards on the quality of life by developing and advocating scientifically based consensus codes and standards, research, training, and education.

NFPA activities generally fall into two broad, interrelated areas: technical and educational. NFPA's technical activity involves development, publication, and dissemination of more than 300

timely consensus codes and standards intended to minimize the possibility and effects of fire and other hazards. NFPA codes and standards, which are developed under the approved process of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), are widely used as a basis of legislation and regulation at all levels of government.

In some way, virtually every building, process, service, design, and installation in society today is affected by codes and standards developed through NFPA's system. Several NFPA codes have reached worldwide recognition, such as the *Fire Prevention Code* (NFPA 1), the *Life Safety Code*® (NFPA 101), the *National Electrical Code*® (NFPA 70), and the *National Fuel Gas Code* (NFPA 54). NFPA is in the process of developing the *NFPA Building Code*™, a central component of the full set of codes and standards for the built environment to be known as the *NFPA Consensus Codes*™ Set.

While the primary purpose of NFPA's Life Safety Code pertains to life safety from fire and other perils encountered in buildings and structures, compliance with code requirements prevents countless injuries to persons who utilize such code compliant buildings and structures on an everyday basis.

The first edition of NFPA's Life Safety Code was published in 1927. A History of the Code, published with the 1927 edition, states that *"the Building Exits Code as printed herewith had its origin in the work of the Committee on Safety to Life of the National Fire Protection Association which was appointed in 1913. For the first few years of its existence the committee devoted its attention to a study of the notable fires involving loss of life, such as the Iroquois Theater fire, the Collinwood School fire, and the Triangle Waist Company fire, and similar disasters, analyzing the causes of this loss of life. This work led to the preparation of standards for the construction of stairways, fire escapes, and for the construction and arrangement of exit facilities for factories and schools, which form the basis of the present code"*.

## **ANSI A117.1, Accessible and Usable Buildings and Structures**

ANSI A117.1 is published by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), headquartered in Washington, D.C. (with offices in New York City). The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has served in its capacity as administrator and coordinator of the United States private sector voluntary standardization system for more than 80 years. Founded in 1918 by five engineering societies and three government agencies, the Institute remains a private, nonprofit membership organization supported by a diverse constituency of private and public sector organizations.

Throughout its history, the ANSI Federation has maintained as its primary goal the enhancement of global competitiveness of U.S. business and the American quality of life by promoting and facilitating voluntary consensus standards and conformity assessment systems, and promoting their integrity. The Institute represents the interests of its nearly 1,000 company, organization, government agency, and institutional and international members.

ANSI does not itself develop American National Standards. Rather, it facilitates development by establishing consensus among qualified groups. The Institute ensures that its guiding principles -- consensus, due process and openness -- are followed by the more than 175 distinct entities currently accredited under one of the Federation's three methods of accreditation (organization, committee or canvass). ANSI-accredited developers are committed to supporting the development of national and, in many cases international standards, addressing the critical trends of technological innovation, marketplace globalization and regulatory reform.

The first edition ANSI A117.1 was published in 1961 (titled Specifications for Making Buildings and Facilities Accessible to and Usable by the Physically Handicapped). The Foreword to the 1998 edition states that the 1961 edition presented the first criteria for accessibility to be approved as an ANSI standard and was the result of research conducted by the

University of Illinois under a grant from the Easter Seal Research Foundation. The National Easter Seal Society and the President's Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities became members of the Secretariat and the Standard was reaffirmed in 1971.

*Special note: It is said that there are only two kinds of people: the disabled, and the temporarily able.*

In 1974, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development joined the Secretariat and sponsored needed research, which resulted in the 1980 edition. After publication of the 1986 edition, when requested in 1987, the Council of American Building Officials (CABO) assumed the Secretariat. Central to the intent of the change in the Secretariat was the development of a standard that, when adopted as part of a building code, would be compatible with the building code and its enforcement. The 1998 edition largely achieved that goal. In 1998, as stated above, CABO became the International Code Council (ICC).

## **The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)**

Signed into law on July 26 1990, and administered by the Department of Justice (Civil Rights Division, Disability Rights Section), the Americans with Disabilities Act is a wide-ranging legislation intended to make American Society more accessible to people with disabilities.

To ensure that the future built environment is accessible to people with disabilities, the ADA requires (**Title III, Public Accommodations**) that all new construction, facility alterations, and existing buildings meet specific architectural design standards. The Department has taken a wide range of enforcement actions to ensure that owners, architects, and others involved in the design and construction process meet their ADA obligations.

Title III applies to a private entity that owns, operates, leases, or leases to, a place of public accommodation. Places of public accommodation include a wide range of entities,

such as restaurants, hotels, theaters, doctors' offices, pharmacies, retail stores, museums, libraries, parks, private schools, and day care centers. Private clubs and religious organizations are exempt from the ADA's title III requirements for public accommodations. Public accommodation standards (a revision of ANSI A117.1) contained in Appendix A to 28 CFR 36 became effective on January 26, 1992.

**Texas.** There is no statewide building code for the State of Texas. Each city or county is free to adopt its own code.

Regarding accessibility, in 1970, Texas promulgated "Standards and Specifications for the Construction of Public Buildings and Facilities in the State of Texas Usable By the Physically Handicapped and Disabled Citizens," Article 678g, *Vernon's Annotated Civil Statutes of Texas*, Senate Bill No. 111, dated January 1, 1970.

The current 1993 standards, renamed "Texas Accessibility Standards" (TAS), became effective April 1, 1994, and apply to public buildings and facilities; privately owned buildings and facilities leased or occupied by state agencies; places of public accommodation; and commercial facilities. These standards are to be applied during the design, construction, and alteration of such buildings and facilities to the extent required by regulations issued by the Texas Department of Licensing and Regulation, under the Architectural Barriers Act, codified as Article 9102, Texas Civil Statutes.

The revised standards closely follow ANSI A117.1 and the American's with Disabilities Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG), and were intended to facilitate equivalency certification of the state program for the elimination of architectural barriers by the United States Department of Justice.

The State of Texas Fire Marshall's Office has also adopted the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101) and uses this code to conduct its inspections throughout the state.

**Louisiana.** There is no statewide building code for the State of Louisiana. Each city or parish is free to adopt its own building code, and in this regard, the Standard Building Code dominates.

In addition, all building construction plans are to be submitted to the State Fire Marshal's Office for their review to assure compliance with the Life Safety Code (NFPA 101), and the Americans with Disabilities Act – Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG).

**New Mexico.** The Construction Industries Division of the Regulation and Licensing Department has jurisdiction over construction in any part of the state where a county does not have a code officer or it is not inside a city limit. The state uses the most current Uniform Building Code (as modified by the New Mexico Building Code) for these areas (with the IBC likely to be adopted in May of 2003). If the drawings of proposed buildings are not reviewed at the local level, they are reviewed at the state level. The provisions of ANSI A117.1 are enforced through its adoption within the Uniform Building Code and the State of New Mexico Building Code.

As administered by the State Fire Marshall's Office, the State of New Mexico has also adopted NFPA 101 (Life Safety Code) as mandatory throughout the state unless a City has created a Fire Prevention Bureau and adopted their own Fire Code. If an issue is not covered in the local code, or is less stringent, the state code applies.