Consolidation of code organizations

by **Mark S. Graham**

This month, the three U.S. model building code organizations are finalizing a long-term initiative toward consolidating into one organization. As a result of this consolidation, the issues of building code applicability, enforcement and compliance should become clearer.

Background

Historically, three model building codes, developed by three separate organizations, have served as the technical basis for U.S. building code adoption and enforcement. These are *The BOCA National Building Code*, published by the Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) International Inc.; *Standard Building Code*, published by the Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI) Inc.; and *Uniform Building Code*, published by the International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) Inc.

Individual code jurisdictions (states, counties, parishes and cities) have had the option of choosing any of the three model building codes or developing their own codes—and some have done so. This type of "home rule" creates the potential for uncertainty and inconsistency in code adoption and enforcement. For example, a 1996 survey conducted by the Chicago Roofing Contractors Association revealed 21 building codes were applicable in the various code jurisdictions of metropolitan Chicago. As a result, Chicago's roofing contractors face the possibility of distinctly different code requirements in the jurisdictions in which they perform work.

Requests from building designers and owners for uniformity or consolidation of building codes can be traced to the 1970s and fell largely on deaf ears. After all, the three model building code groups were competing with each other.

In 1993, the model building code groups decided to adopt a common code format. As a result, for example, each code's roofing-related requirements were moved to Chapter 15—Roof Assemblies and Rooftop Structures—in each code. This decision not only assisted model code users, but it also served as the impetus for future dialogue and cooperation among model code groups.

ICC

In 1994, the three model code groups formed the International Codes Council (ICC) as a not-for-profit organization with the intent of having one set of building, fire and life-safety model codes that apply to the entire country and around the world.

In 1995, ICC published its first "I-Code," the *International Plumbing Code*. By 2000, ICC published 11 construction codes, including the *International Building Code, 2000 Edition* (IBC). (For more information about IBC, see "New building code offers unified standards," March 2000 issue, page 42.)

To support ICC's codes, the three model code organizations stopped developing individual building codes.

In 2001, the memberships of the three model code organizations approved a resolution to begin an integration plan to merge their organizations into ICC. At their joint annual conference held in Fort Worth, Texas, Sept. 29 - Oct. 5, 2002, the groups' memberships gave final approval to consolidate into ICC this month.

What it means

As a consolidated organization, ICC has about 55,000 members with a staff of more than 300 in multiple locations around the United States. Most of ICC's offices are the former office locations of BOCA, SBCCI and ICBO.

ICC's objective is to direct the collective efforts of building code officials toward widespread adoption of I-Codes throughout the United States.

As a result of this consolidation, you should begin to see more uniform adoption of I-Codes, including IBC, and more consistent interpretations of roofing-related code requirements. However, individual code jurisdictions' transitions from the previously existing model codes to I-Codes will take some time.

I compliment BOCA, SBCCI, ICBO and the newly formed consolidated ICC on their efforts.

Additional information about the consolidation of the model code groups is available at ICC's Web site, iccint.intlcode.org.

Information about roofing-related building code requirements is provided in *The NRCA Building Codes Manual*, which is available from NRCA's InfoExpress by calling (866) ASK-NRCA (275-6722) or accessing shop.nrca.net.

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