Update on building codes

by Mark S. Graham

It has been five years since the three legacy code organizations consolidated their efforts into the International Code Council (ICC) and published the first editions of the I-codes.

This month, I will update you on the status of jurisdictions' adoptions of the I-codes, as well as adoptions of the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA's) *NFPA 5000®: Building Construction and Safety Code*.

Legacy codes

Historically in the U.S., three "legacy" code organizations—Building Officials and Code Administrators International (BOCA) Inc., International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) Inc. and Southern Building Code Congress International (SBCCI) Inc.—published *The BOCA National Building Code*, *Uniform Building Code* and *Standard Building Code*, respectively. These three model building codes served as the technical basis for most jurisdictions' building codes since the early 1900s.

In 1994, the three legacy code organizations formed ICC as a separate, nonprofit organization with the intent of developing a common set of building, fire and life-safety codes that apply to the entire U.S.

ICC's codes

In 1995, ICC published its first I-code, the *International Plumbing Code*. In 2000, ICC published its consolidated building codes, the *International Building Code* (IBC) and *International Residential Code* (IRC). To date, ICC has published 11 construction-related codes.

In 2003, ICC updated IBC and IRC; subsequent editions of these codes will be published again in early 2006.

The 2000 or 2003 editions of IBC have been adopted in 45 states and by 872 local jurisdictions as the technical basis for their building codes; IRC has been adopted in 45 states and by 829 local jurisdictions.

Interestingly, two states—New York and Wisconsin—which historically had developed and maintained their own building codes, now have adopted IBC. In addition, Florida, which also had developed its state code, has adopted IBC as the technical basis of its new state code, which will go into effect Oct. 1.

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NFPA 5000

In 2003, NFPA published its first model building code, NFPA 5000, which was developed largely as a competitive alternative to IBC and other building codes. (For more information, see "NFPA 5000: a new model building code," February 2003 issue, page 36.)

To date, adoption of NFPA 5000 has been limited; reportedly, it is used only in Pasadena, Texas, and Pittsfield, Maine.

Use of NFPA 5000 is being considered as the technical basis for upcoming revisions of California's state code and the city code in New York City. However, final decisions have not been made and specific schedules for implementation have not been finalized.

Also, NFPA 5000 is being used as a design standard by several U.S. federal government agencies, including the National Park Service and Federal Prison System.

Closing thoughts

Since 2000, when the legacy model building codes were in effect generally throughout the U.S., IBC and IRC largely have taken over as the basis for most state and local building codes.

In early 2006, updated editions of IBC, IRC and NFPA 5000 will be published based on changes to these codes that have been approved by ICC and NFPA, respectively, since their model building codes were published in 2003. Once these updated editions are available, I expect a number of additional code jurisdictions may adopt ICC's or NFPA's model building codes.

Additional information regarding IBC, IRC and NFPA 5000, including information about specific states and major city jurisdictions, is included in *The NRCA Building Codes Manual, Second Edition*. This manual is available by contacting NRCA InfoExpress at (866) ASK-NRCA (275-6722) or accessing shop.nrca.net.

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