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The United States has a unique approach to the development of Building Regulations. The regulations are actually developed by not for profit, public benefit organizations and are then made available to state and local jurisdictions for adoption. The regulations are often termed model codes. These organizations are intended to remove the burden of drafting building regulations for state and local government entities.

ICC

The International Code Council is an organization formed in 1994 by the three model building code groups in the United States which include the Building Officials and Code Administrators, International (BOCAI), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO) and Southern Building Code Congress (SBCCI). The main purpose for the creation of the ICC was to develop a single set of model building and related codes. Most recently, the ICC has just released a new set of prescriptive codes including a building, fire, plumbing and mechanical code. Also, since 1996 the ICC has had two committees developing performance-based building and fire codes. This effort has resulted in a final draft document to be released in August of 2000 which is titled the "ICC Performance Building Code for Buildings and Facilities."

The performance code being released is completely independent of the prescriptive codes. Also, since codes developed by ICC are simply model codes, the adoption of codes is a state or local decision. Therefore, the performance code developed by this group can not be mandated for adoption.

If a jurisdiction chooses to adopt performance-based regulations instead of prescriptive regulations it is still intended that they use the prescriptive documents as an "acceptable method" of compliance. The ICC Performance Code for Buildings and Facilities does not directly reference the prescriptive codes. Instead Section 104, Acceptable Methods provides criteria as to

what methods are considered acceptable for design. Essentially, design approaches must utilize what is defined as an “authoritative document” or a “design guide”. These terms are defined as follows:

AUTHORITATIVE DOCUMENT. A document containing a body of knowledge commonly used by practicing architects or engineers. It represents the state-of-the-art including accepted engineering practices, test methods, criteria, loads, safety factors, reliability factors and similar technical matters. The document portrays the standard of care normally observed within a particular discipline. The content is promulgated through an open consensus process or a review by professional peers conducted by recognized authoritative professional societies, codes or standards organizations or governmental bodies.

DESIGN GUIDE. A document containing a body of knowledge or information used by practicing architects and engineers, which is not required to meet an open consensus requirement. It represents accepted architectural/engineering principles and practices, tests and test data, criteria, loads, safety factors, reliability factors and similar technical data.

The prescriptive codes would be considered “authoritative documents.”

In addition to the acceptable methods section of the code there is also a methodology set out in Appendix C which provides criteria to assist in the evaluation of a method that would not fit under either one of the definitions above. Such methods would be considered “individually substantiated methods.” An example of such a method may be a methodology developed as a result of research or a Ph.D. Thesis. This Appendix allows the Performance code to allow innovation but in a structured manner.

Generally this document is qualitative in nature. The quantitative information is to be outside the code in documents such as those defined above. It is somewhat difficult to foresee how jurisdictions will adopt this code with regard to what is made mandatory. Figure 1 provides an illustration of how the document is intended to be adopted and to be used. The intention

was that the document be adopted without mandatory links to design methods, performance criteria and verification techniques. Instead it was the intention to provide a framework of administrative provisions and design performance level determination techniques to assist in the decision of which methods are acceptable on an individual basis. AS noted above the prescriptive codes would be considered authoritative documents.

International Performance Code for Buildings and Facilities

