



Code Connection

Building Code Adoptions

by WTCA Staff

How well do you know the IBC or IRC building code adoption process in your state or local jurisdiction?

Did you ever wonder how your local or state building code came to be adopted? Building codes are adopted either at the state level for state enforcement or by local jurisdictions within a state. For instance, the state of Kentucky has adopted both the International Building Code and the International Residential Code statewide. In Illinois, local jurisdictions adopt the code that they will use. For instance, Champaign and 88 additional local Illinois jurisdictions have adopted the IBC and IRC. (For more information on the status of the adoption of the ICC family of codes visit www.iccsafe.org/government/adoption.html.)

Building codes are adopted by statute (law). The governing statute(s) generally empower a Building Code Council or some other specified department to adopt and update a building code for commercial and/or residential construction. Thus, building code adoption and enforcement is similar to a two-step distribution process.

Thirty states and Washington DC, the Department of Defense, Department of State, the National Park Service and U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the IBC and another 11 states have accepted the IBC for local adoption. Twenty-seven states and Washington DC and U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the IRC and another 17 states have accepted the IRC for local adoption. A number of additional jurisdictions are

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currently in the process of adopting either or both codes. You can see that IBC and IRC implementation in the United States is widespread. However, the adoption process still allows for a wide range of code variation.

There are significant differences in how each state or jurisdiction adopts, amends and maintains their building code(s). It is important to understand the legal process of code adoption, as well as become familiar with the content of the building code itself. Most code jurisdictions enact statutes that do more than just adopt a specific building code.

The statute or statutes adopting a building code may include local amendments to the model code being adopted, implementation and enforcement requirements, or required frequency for code review and update. These statutes may even include specific requirements regarding the ability of local jurisdictions to adopt more restrictive local requirements.

In order to be fully familiar with building codes in any code jurisdiction, you should be familiar with all of the following:

- What the statutes say that adopt a given building code.
- The version of the building code that is adopted and the code amendments and the amendment process.
- Any other restrictive local requirements for every jurisdiction that is allowed to legally adopt them.
- The status of code interpretations and guidelines and their legal status.

at a glance

- ❑ Thirty states, Washington DC, the Department of Defense, the Department of State, the National Park Service and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the IBC.
- ❑ Twenty-seven states, Washington DC and the U.S. Virgin Islands have adopted the IRC.
- ❑ While monitoring state, regional or local code activities may sound as fun as watching paint dry, the effect of bad code adoption can be profound.
- ❑ Our industry goal is to facilitate an effective monitoring process. The more knowledge we have, the more power we will have in shaping our industry's future.

- The statutes regarding the scope and practice of engineering and architecture usually will affect how construction is done and the building code process.
- The requirements for licensing of specific trades, such as contractors.

Monitoring the local building code activities is a very difficult yet important industry activity because it can have a significant impact on how a local component manufacturer transacts business. One way that WTCA members and chapters have been doing this effectively is by getting involved in their local, regional or state homebuilders associations, since a key activity of these groups is to monitor and influence local building laws and regulations. Another way has been through monitoring state or local code jurisdiction web sites as state and local laws and ordinances are posted. As an industry, the more proactive we are in monitoring all possible code, law and ordinance activities, the more likely we are to be able to respond positively. Our industry goal over the next few years will be to put in place an effective monitoring process, because the more knowledge we have the more power we will have to shape our industry's future.

See **Support Docs** at www.sbcmag.info for building code links. **SBC**

For more information about how to get involved in the code process, contact WTCA staff at 608/274-4849 or codes@woodtruss.com.

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