



National Council of Governments on Building Codes and Standards



States and localities across the United States play a very important role—they serve as the front line, protecting the health, safety and welfare of citizens by adopting and enforcing building codes. Unfortunately, protecting the public is not always easy, especially when government budgets are being cut, employees are being laid off and education and training funds are non-existent. The National Institute of Building Sciences recently established the National Council of Governments on Building Codes and Standards (NCGBCS) to help state and local jurisdictions enhance the public's social and economic well-being by coordinating efforts across geographic boundaries to make technical findings, improve performance criteria and promote standards to ensure safe, durable, accessible and efficient buildings.

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When the U.S. Congress authorized the establishment of the National Institute of Building Sciences nearly four decades ago, one of the Institute's mandates was to conduct programs that would facilitate cooperation among states. The goal was to encourage the states to accept technical findings and nationally recognized performance criteria, standards and other technical provisions for building regulations brought about by the Institute. This program would have several priorities: encouraging states to implement the findings and regulatory provisions; helping states to develop in-service training programs for building officials; and establishing fully staffed and qualified state technical agencies to advise local officials on questions of technical interpretation.

According to a 2010 report prepared by the Institute's Consultative Council:

- Jurisdictions lack the resources to properly enforce building codes. At the state and local level, where code adoption and enforcement is largely conducted, the lack of resources (both financial and technical) significantly affects the ability of state and local officials to ensure that new buildings are satisfying the requirements provided by codes and standards and are achieving the inherent benefits.
- Most people do not understand building codes. Policymakers and the general public often misunderstand the codes and standards development, adoption and compliance process due to its complexities. There needs to be education initiatives to improve understanding.
- Getting jurisdictions involved can improve the process. Increasing the participation of federal, state and local government agencies in the development of codes and standards would yield more uniformity and more consistently adopted and understood codes, thereby increasing the effectiveness of model building codes.

The National Council of Governments on Building Codes and Standards has developed a comprehensive agenda to help state and local jurisdictions with these challenges. NCGBCS is tasked with identifying and providing resources needed to conduct, coordinate, promote and sponsor research and development activities related to information exchange, education and training. The Council will conduct forums and workshops. It will manage research and research-related projects. It will disseminate information and review work performed by other groups. The Council also may develop (or support the development of) and recommend standards, guidelines and conformity assessment programs. It will work to stimulate innovation in states and within the building industry. NCGBCS also will promote increased understanding and communications among architects and engineers, builders, manufacturers, product vendors, voluntary standards organizations, users, government agencies and other sectors of the building community. To achieve these objectives, NCGBCS will need an active and dedicated membership.

Council membership is divided into two categories:

- **Delegate Members:** This category includes each agency or department having responsibilities for buildings and building related activities within a jurisdiction. Delegate members may be represented by one person who shall be an employee of that agency or department, or an officer of a relevant commission, board or committee concerned with state or local building codes, standards and regulations.
- **Affiliate Members:** This category includes any organizational representative or individual not covered under the Delegate membership who represents one or more of the categories identified in the Institute's enabling legislation.

All individuals or organizations interested in building codes and standards development, adoption and enforcement are encouraged to join this Council. ■



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