

The ICC Code Development Process

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As firefighters, your input and participation is essential to develop model building codes and standards that ensure building safety and fire prevention. Standards and codes are the “S” component in the National Volunteer Fire Council’s Firefighter Health and Safety Priorities B.E.S.T. practices (www.nvfc.org/health_safety).

The International Codes (*I-Codes*) are developed through a governmental consensus process. It is an open, inclusive process that allows input from all individuals and groups. While everyone can participate in the process, final decisions are made by International Code Council (ICC) voting Members – Governmental and Honorary Members who, with no vested interests beyond public safety, represent the public’s best interest.

The mission of the ICC – a membership association dedicated to building safety, fire prevention, and energy efficiency – is to provide the highest quality codes, standards, products, and services with the safety and performance of the built environment in mind. With the release of the 2012 family of *I-Codes*, the code development cycle for the 2015 *I-Codes* is set to begin. It is not difficult to follow the steps that a change proposal follows from introduction to Final Action Hearing.

Overview: The Codes and the Process

The *I-Codes* are the first and only set of coordinated, consistent, and comprehensive construction, fire prevention, plumbing, zoning, and energy and sustainability codes. As a result, fire and building code enforcement officials, architects, engineers, designers, and contractors can work with a consistent set of requirements from coast to coast. Uniform education and certification programs can be used internationally.

The consensus process through which ICC develops and maintains comprehensive and balanced codes is designed to protect the public’s health, safety, and welfare as well as protect our planet by encouraging water and energy conservation and other sustainability methods. The ICC process allows all jurisdictions, regardless of size, to benefit from the expertise of thousands of professionals who participate in the development of the model codes, available for adoption at the state and local level. The cost to include this expertise and manage this process would be prohibitive for any single jurisdiction.

The Foundation: Governmental Consensus

Similar to the development of laws, the ICC code development system ensures fairness in the process, controls against conflicts of interest, and prevents vested economic interests from determining the outcome of a code change proposal. This practice has resulted in the highest level of building safety in the world. The ICC governmental consensus process meets the principles defined by the U.S. Standards Strategy of 2005; and the OMB Circular A-119, Federal

Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards and in Conformity Assessment Activities (1998), codified by Public Law 104-113, National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995. The key mechanisms that govern the ICC governmental consensus process include:

Open Public Forums

- All forums are open to the public at no cost.
- Anyone can submit a code change proposal and testify at the hearings.
- All views are considered by a code committee prior to a vote.

Decision Transparency

- All testimony and committee recommendations are made in open public hearings.
- All final code change proposal decisions are made by public safety officials in an open hearing.

Representation of Interests

- Wide-ranging representation.
- Full disclosure of conflicts of interest.
- One-third of the committee's members must be governmental members with no financial vested interests.
- Membership on a committee is not conditional on membership in ICC.

Due Process

- Equal opportunities for rebuttal.
- Committees consider all views, objections, and the cost impact of all code change proposals.
- All who attend can testify.

Appeals Process

- Appeals considered per due process, in accordance with [Council Policy #1](http://www.iccsafe.org/AboutICC/Documents/CP31-07.pdf) [<http://www.iccsafe.org/AboutICC/Documents/CP31-07.pdf>].

Majority Consensus

- A simple majority from the committee decides the recommended action on the proposed code change.
- An assembly action allows an audience vote on the committee's action.

The ICC Code Development Process

The ICC code development process is the framework to develop and provide a comprehensive regulatory system for the built environment that is effective, efficient, and meets the needs of government, industry, public health, and safety. The objectives of the ICC code development process are to:

- Recognize and evaluate in a timely manner technological developments that affect construction techniques/regulations
- Host an open debate and democratic discussion of proposals

- Present the final determination of code text modifications
- Create an opportunity for building, plumbing, electrical, mechanical, fire, energy, and sustainability professionals to react and share lessons learned

The Eight-Step I-Code Development Cycle

The eight-step ICC [code development process](http://www.iccsafe.org/cs/codes/Pages/default.aspx) [http://www.iccsafe.org/cs/codes/Pages/default.aspx] demonstrates a continuous improvement cycle, incorporates the latest lessons learned in the construction industry, and keeps up with technological changes to protect communities and build a safer world. ICC publishes new editions of the code every three years.

Step 1: Code Changes Submitted

Any interested person may submit a code change proposal. Before code changes are due for the current cycle, an announcement is posted on the ICC web site and in other media, including a notice in the Federal Register. In year one of the code cycle, Group A codes begin this revision process. In year two, Group B codes begin the process. To see a description of Group A and Group B codes, visit <http://www.iccsafe.org/cs/codes/Documents/2012-13cycle/CodeDevSchedule.pdf>.

ICC has established a Fire Service Code Action Committee and Work Groups that provide a forum for those new to the ICC code development process to become involved at this initial step in the process. Information about meeting locations and dates will be publicized shortly and the national fire service organizations are active participants.

Step 2: Proposed Code Changes Posted

Code change proposals are posted at least 30 days prior to the public hearing.

Step 3: Code Development Hearing (Public Hearing)

The Code Development Hearing is a public meeting open to all parties. Anyone can attend, testify, and take part in debates. There is no cost to attend or participate in the hearing, which can also be viewed via webcast. During the code development hearing, interested parties can present their views including the cost, benefits, and impact of the code change proposals. The hearing includes the following steps:

- **Floor Discussion** – The code change proposals are considered at the floor discussion.
- **Committee Action** – The code development committee makes a recommendation on the code change proposal disposition.
- **Assembly Action** – ICC Members in attendance can challenge committee actions.

Step 4: Public Hearing Results Posted

The results of the public hearing are posted not less than 60 days prior to the Final Action Hearing.

Step 5: Public Comments Sought on Public Hearing Results

Any interested person can submit comments on the results of the public hearing to challenge a committee action or assembly action. This public comment process provides an opportunity to consider specific support for or objections to the results of the public hearings.

Step 6: Public Comments Posted

Code changes that received a public comment as well as code changes that had a successful assembly action are posted in the Final Action Agenda at least 30 days prior to the Final Action consideration. The proposed changes receiving neither an assembly action nor a public comment will be block voted on by simple majority at the Final Action Hearing.

Step 7: Final Action Hearing

Eligible voters consisting of designated Governmental Members and Honorary Members cast votes on the final determination of all code change proposals presented in a code development cycle. The Final Action Hearings are open, fair, objective, and allow no proprietary interests to influence their outcomes. The Final Action Hearings are open to the public and also webcast with streaming video and audio.

Eligible voters: The eligible ICC Governmental Member Representatives and Honorary Members in attendance at the Final Action Hearing will each have one vote per code change considered. ICC Governmental Members are those who, in their positions of public trust, enforce the code and are charged with the public's safety. Any change to a representative's voting status must be received by the Code Council no later than 10 days prior to the commencement of the first day of the Final Action Hearing to ensure the voter's eligibility. For information on the detailed procedure for the Final Action Hearing, please visit the ICC Code Development Process web site at www.iccsafe.org/cs.

Step 8: New Edition is Published

The final actions on all proposed code changes are incorporated in the next edition of the applicable *I-Codes*.

New Editions: The ICC Board has determined that new editions of the codes are to be published every three years. Each new edition will incorporate the results of the code development activity since the last edition.

The ICC code development process is open to all interested stakeholders, and the fire service is a key stakeholder when it comes to both public and first responder safety in the built environment. Whether you have an idea to enhance a current code requirement, want to recommend a new provision for the next edition of the *I-Codes* or simply have a passion to become more engaged with your peers in attending public code change hearings, there are many opportunities to get involved. Through your participation and dedication to ensuring the model *I-Codes* are the best they can be, you help to improve safety for both your professional colleagues and the public you have sworn to protect. Get involved and share your knowledge; help make a difference.

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responsibilities include being the national principal point of contact for fire service activities and representing the Code Council at meetings with fire service organizations. He also serves as Deputy Chief Fire Instructor at the Suffolk County (NY) Fire Academy and as a College Instructor at SUNY-Empire State College. He holds an MBA and bachelors' degrees in Fire Service Administration and Accounting along with several professional certifications. He is a past president and active member of the New York State Fire Marshals and Inspectors Association and a member of several professional fire service associations.