

## Developing Modern Day Codes - The ICC's Fire Code Action Committee

*This issue of TechNotes has been written by Jeffrey M. Hugo, CBO, NFSA's Manager of Codes.*

The Fire Code Action Committee (FCAC) is one of several Code Action Committees (CAC) formed by the International Code Council (ICC) with a purpose to enhance the technical requirements of the International Codes. These committees are formed to pursue opportunities to improve and enhance the codes under their scope by introducing well vetted and well written code change proposals. This includes both the technical aspects of the codes as well as the code content in terms of scope and application of referenced standards.

The FCAC has the responsibility to address the technical subject areas in not only the IFC, but also in IBC Chapters 7, 8, 9, 14, and 26. FCAC also covers the IWUIC (International Wildland Urban Interface Code) and the ICC Performance Code.

The other Code Action Committees (CAC's) are:

- Building (BCAC): IBC (Ch. 1-6, 10-13, 15-25, 27-35), IRC (Ch. 1-10), IEBC, IPMC, IZC
- Plumbing, Mechanical & Fuel Gas (PMGCAC): IFGC, IMC, IPC, IPSDC, IRC (Ch. 12-33), ISPSC
- Sustainability, Energy, & High Performance (SEHPCAC): IECC, IgCC, IRC (Ch. 11)

The fire service can be credited with this CAC model. In 2003, the Joint Fire Service Review Committee (JFSRC) was formed for the development of the 2006 ICC codes. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) was established with the IAFC (International Association of Fire Chiefs) and NASFM (National Association of State Fire Marshals) with the ICC to create a system of regional work groups that reported to a main body (JFSRC) which in turn submitted proposals with the support and vetting of these fire service groups. This process greatly improved the development of the I-codes by reducing duplicate proposals and creating more consensus testimony, which reduced debate during the hearings. The results are proposals to the codes that are well developed and supported by diverse stakeholders. These proposals have not only reduced the workload of all of those involved in the codes process, but they have also eliminated many follow-up proposals to "fix" mistakes on previous editions.

The current FCAC consists of 15 members from all aspects of the fire service and industry. NFSA's Manager of Codes, Jeffrey Hugo was selected



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for the 2012 code cycle and was recently reappointed to the FCAC for the 2015 code cycle. The FCAC also includes two representatives from NASFM, eight representatives from IAFC, one representative from NVFC (National Volunteer Fire Council) and the remaining are appointed through ICC's Codes and Standards committee selection process.

While the FCAC is the main body and the name on the submitted proposals, it cannot do the work that it does without the support and input of four Regional Work Groups (RWG). Each area of the country has a RWG of approximately 12-15 people that is aligned with two divisions of the IAFC. Representatives to these RWG's are also covered under the IAFC, NASFM and the NVFC through an MOU with ICC.

Does a mechanism such as a CAC make a difference when submitting changes to the code? The answer is "yes." When the CAC's meet, approximately three times a year, they meet in same location to collaborate within their group and with the other CAC's to discuss proposals that may cross over in other areas of expertise. Each meeting is open to the public and is attended by many interested parties and industries. Other ICC committees are also able to have an audience with a CAC to discuss or vet issues such as the CTC (Code Technology Committee) and the AHC (Ad-Hoc Committee on Healthcare). Oftentimes a proposal will have one or more of groups named as proponents to a change. Proposals with a single CAC or multiple parties as the proponent can give the ICC membership some confidence that the issue has the support of the committees of the groups. As mentioned already, this eliminates a lot of testimony time and multiple proposals. When a typical code hearing agenda has approximately 1,200 proposals that need to be discussed and voted, a proposal has a greater chance of passing when it has already been discussed and modified before the hearing.

The FCAC generated 64 proposals to the 2013 Group B cycle (working on the 2015 IFC, IBC, IRC, IEBC and IECC). Of these 64 proposals, 54 were approved by the various committees at Committee Action Hearings in Dallas, TX last year (2013). Later on in the year, FCAC submitted 20 public comments and in the Final Action (which took place in Atlantic City, NJ) was involved in 64 proposals, of which 47 proposals passed to make up the 2015 editions.

Recently, the FCAC met in Chicago for the first meeting to develop proposals and discuss changes to the 2018 editions of the ICC Codes. Part of the discussion was the strategy in getting the proposal to retrofit A-2 occupancies with sprinklers passed in the 2018 edition, along with the retrofitting of R-1 occupancies (hotels and motels) due to the four deaths in unsprinklered motels in New Jersey already in 2014. A few other assignments with ties to the sprinkler industry will be to revise and update the high piled storage chapter in the IFC, draft stopping requirements in unsprinklered combustible attics, and high rise combustible wood structures using Cross-Laminated Timber (CLT) technology.

As mentioned above, Jeffrey Hugo of NFSA, is a member of the FCAC for the upcoming 2018 cycle as well as the liaison to the Midwestern Regional Work Group. Proposals for the IBC for the 2018 cycle are due January 2015 and January 2016 for the IFC and IRC. Do you see something that needs to be changed? Send an email to: hugo@nfsa.org

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