



The Impact of Model Building Codes

Full Mitigation Best Practice Story

State-wide, District of Columbia

Washington, DC - The nation's model building codes have a greater impact on the quality of construction and how structures will withstand the forces of nature than any other FEMA program. The philosophy of ensuring the quality of construction at the local level before a disaster by making the nation's model building codes adequate for all hazards has made the work of FEMA much easier, both before and after a disaster.



FEMA's experience with the model code organizations began in the early 1980's. The most significant example of FEMA's work with the building codes occurred when the International Code Council, which was formed from the three original model code organizations, attempted to develop a single International Building Code. It quickly became apparent that the existence of two sources of seismic code provisions was a serious issue that threatened to derail the entire effort.

FEMA was one of the first outside organizations to meet with the original International Code Council in 1995 to help resolve this issue. FEMA met with the relevant parties, developed a plan that would respond to most of the concerns that had been raised, and contracted and managed the Code Resource Development Committee Project. The Committee ultimately developed the provisions that were successfully balloted into the International Building Code (IBC).

This was probably one of the most critical issues facing the IBC process, and its resolution significantly improved the quality and applicability of the new IBC. FEMA's work was acknowledged in separate letters from the International Code Council and the International Conference of Building Officials.

Shortly after that process was underway, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) decided to offer their own building code to compliment their wide variety of fire and life safety standards. FEMA worked with the various committees, and FEMA's representative was given a seat on the Technical Correlating Committee, which oversees and resolves conflicts from the other developmental committees. With FEMA's involvement, the NFPA 5000 Building Code adopted the latest version of the ASCE-7 Minimum Design Loads Standards by reference and was published recently.

Activity/Project Location

Geographical Area: **State-wide**

FEMA Region: **Region III**

State: **District of Columbia**

Key Activity/Project Information

Sector: **Public**
Hazard Type: **Earthquake**
Activity/Project Type: **Building Codes**
Activity/Project Start Date: **01/1980**
Activity/Project End Date: **Ongoing**
Funding Source: **National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP)**

Activity/Project Economic Analysis

Cost: **Amount Not Available**

Activity/Project Disaster Information

Mitigation Resulted From Federal
Disaster? **Unknown**
Value Tested By Disaster? **Unknown**
Repetitive Loss Property? **Unknown**

Reference URLs

Reference URL 1: http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/earthquake/sty_codes.shtm
Reference URL 2: http://www.fema.gov/plan/prevent/bestpractices/NEHRP_BP_page.shtm

Main Points

- Ensuring the quality of construction through making the nation's model building codes adequate for all hazards has made the work of FEMA much easier, both before and after a disaster.
- FEMA was one of the first outside organizations to meet with the original International Code Council in 1995 to help resolve the issue of multiple sources of seismic code provisions.