

Why we adopted the “International Building Code” (IBC) and why we continue to adopt the revisions.

The IBC is, unfortunately, not a world code, it is a U.S. code. If the IBC was a world code the loss of life and damage from recent earthquakes would have been greatly reduced. The embassies and buildings in those countries that were built to U.S. standards are still standing.

The IBC is developed and written by the “International Code Council” (ICC). The ICC is made up of code and building officials, engineers, firefighters, builders, designers, architects, and anyone whom wants to be involved from all over the United States. The IBC headquarters is just outside of Chicago in Country Club Hills, IL.

The IBC first edition was in 2000, in 1998 and 1999 while the IBC was being developed; we adopted the Uniform Building Code (UBC). Prior to 1998 there were at least 4 different code organizations (we adopted the BOCA = Building Officials and Code Administrators International, Inc., ICBO = International Conference of Building Officials, SBCCI = Southern Building Code Congress International, and NAHB = National Association of Home Builders). The intent in combining all the organizations was to establish a unified set of guidelines and **minimum standards** into one set of “codes” that architects, engineers, designers, builders and manufactures could rely on regardless where they were in the United States let alone from city to city.

Page one of the International Code best states the reasoning for change;

Section 101.3 Intent. “The purpose of this code is to establish minimum requirements to safeguard the public safety, health and general welfare through affordability, structural strength, means of egress facilities, stability, sanitation, light and ventilation, energy conservation and safety to life and property from fire and other hazards attributed to the built environment and to provide safety to fire fighters and emergency responders during emergency operations”.

Every three years the IBC is revised or updated to allow for new materials, technologies, products and to correct issues that have been a problem or found to be a danger in the past. To change an item or to add or delete language in the “Code” requires a lot of testing in the lab and field, reviews, hearings and voting by the members of the ICC. The City of Cameron Building Inspector has been a member of the ICC since 1999 and has been involved in the reviews and voting on changes. Many times, it takes years to implement changes in the “code”. Recommendations for changes, additions, deletions, new products and so on are made every day.

Some of the benefits of adopting the current version IBC;

1. The Insurance Services Office, INC. (ISO) is an insurer-supported organization with the primary mission of providing advisory insurance underwriting and rate information to insurers. Adoption of the current code and the inspections are one of many items they look at. The lower the score the better, the lower the score the lower the insurance rate for residential and commercial property owners. In 1998, when Inspector Han came to work for Cameron’s building/inspection department the City was rated at a six and had the worst score possible. In 2000, ISO inspected, reviewed and rated us at a five. The year 2005 saw a third inspection, review, and rating and we scored a four. On a commercial building, for example, insurance rates went down \$1,400 a year between 2000 and 2006.
2. Architects, engineers, designers, developers, builders and contractors know what to expect when they are looking at Cameron. They see we have adopted the 2009 IBC, they ask if there

are any additions or deletions. I can answer we have no special provisions and have deleted section P2904 and all associated references. It saves literally 100's of questions about what is allowed and how a structure should be built. It also shows that we are progressive.

3. When all the code organizations combined, they got the expertise from all disciplines; the best research, development and experience concerning cold climates vs. arid (this effects foundations, insulation, heating and cooling), the best energy conservation ideas along with alternative energy (solar and wind), the best on structure stability in regards to flooding, wind and earthquakes, all in one set of codes. Not every section would apply to every region; for example Cameron is excluded from the seismic section because of location and soil conditions. We do not have to strap our water heaters to the wall to prevent falling during an earthquake, but to our southeast a few miles some of the provisions begin to apply. The further southeast you go the requirements increase due to earthquake potential. Southeast Missouri benefits from the code because of research and expertise from the California area and their experiences.
4. When designing, constructing or remodeling a building you have so many more choices of accepted; materials, technologies and methods available than in the past.

The bottom line is that adopting the IBC and having a standard set of guidelines saves lives, money and time for the City and its citizens.

Two final thoughts;

1. The International Building Code is a ***minimum standard***. When someone says they built a structure to "code", don't be too impressed; it means they didn't do any more than they had to. If you related the "code" to grades in school, the "code" is a D minus.
2. The International Building Code does not address "craftsmanship"; you can have all the best materials, design and engineering, but if you do a poor job of putting the pieces together or don't have the skills, it may meet code, but it won't perform as designed.