

CODES & STANDARDS®

Monthly digest of recent events in model codes and standards affecting design professionals, code officials and industry.

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BUILDING CODES AND FRONTIER MENTALITY

FRONTIER MENTALITY - The general concept that humans are separate from and above nature, that humans need to subdue the uninhabited wilderness, and that there are always plenty of fresh natural resources to exploit on the edge of the frontier

HURRICANES, FLOODS AND Katrina still are not enough for some to accept model building codes.

For example, when **Louisiana** and **Mississippi** adopted the *IBC*, their Gulf Coasts did not want to adopt the wind and flood requirements. Starting in 2007 in **Louisiana**, all structures repaired or new construction since Katrina and Rita, including the coast now withstand winds up to 150 m.p.h. in an effort to survive what some experts speculate will be frequent storms in coming years.

A LOT OF places in the U.S. have no codes at all. There is a lot of resistance (*frontier mentality*) to having a government telling someone what they can do with their own property. What they don't realize is that proper code enforcement not only saves lives and property, but also reduces insurance rates and repair costs. Studies have shown that there is a \$4 - \$7 return for every \$1 spent on following the current building codes. Over 16,000 jurisdictions have adopted the *IBC* while **California** and **Hawaii** are taking their time. To view a listing of current code adoptions, go to www.iccsafe.org and then click the USA map.



MANY STATES DO not require licensing for construction contractors (**New York**) while others do not have statewide code adoptions (**Illinois, Missouri** to name a few). It takes a disaster for communities to come to their senses and realize that good code enforcement does not hinder growth, but instead guarantees it. But do we learn our lessons? The Station nightclub fire in Rhode Island changed the requirements for fire sprinklers and made occupant load enforcement a reality. The MGM Hotel fire in Las Vegas confirmed the fact that you don't put occupants beyond the reach of conventional firefighting equipment in a non-fire sprinklered building. Most recently, the disaster with the ceiling tiles in Boston's "Big Dig" tunnel completion led to the death of an innocent bystander. Why weren't test standards followed? **FACTOID:** The deep Southern states have the highest fire death rate per capita in the Nation.

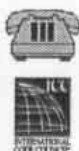
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