

# Know the Code Before You Plan Your Next Project

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Your maintenance buildings are likely targets for code mandated revisions. The combination of the hazardous materials stored, some recent spectacular fires, and the publication of a new building code have sent a signal that we have noted.

For those of us in the design and construction industry, working within the confines of the Code is a routine part of our daily decisions. Building Codes provide a framework that we use to guide our path to an overall solution.

A good design must provide an answer to all concerns; the functionality, the aesthetics, the budget, the schedule, and of course the Codes. Discovering a Code problem anytime after preliminary design will most certainly have a negative impact on the project's function, appearance, budget, etc.

To make things even more difficult, the Building Code is often interpreted differently by each agency. Some jurisdictions

adopt revisions to the Code by adding or deleting certain sections. Local Fire Codes, Zoning Codes and Health Codes can also override the Building Code.

From the comments made at your meeting, you are all aware of how this "system" impacts your mission. But there is some good news on the horizon, we find that many communities have began implementing the 2003 International Building Code (2003 IBC). This Code represents a consolidation of several of the more prevalent Codes and we have witnessed a bit more consistency out there.

Why is that important to you? Because in the past with previous codes, such as the UBC or the SBC, there was more focus on the types of construction. Wood frame vs. concrete panels or fire separation walls were the primary focus. The new Code places an emphasis on the fire sprinkler and alarm systems.

There is a practical reason behind this

shift. As technology has advanced, alarms and automated responses have become quite reliable. The underlying theory is that we should notify and evacuate people, and then let professional fire fighters put out any fires.

By planning each project with the Code in mind, we can consider how to best solve these issues. When possible, we design the structure to minimize the expense of the fire protection systems. Variations in the building's location on the site, the construction materials, the construction type classification, the arrangement of exits, and even the room names can all be utilized to control how the Code will be applied.

Architecture is described as a combination of art and science. Satisfying the Code, the Code Official and the client at the same time definitely moves it toward the "art" category.



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