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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BUILDING DEPARTMENTS/CODE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

AC251

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PREFACE

The attached accreditation criteria has been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced in the accreditation criteria. The criteria was developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and is effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with criteria. If the criteria is an updated version from a previous edition, solid vertical lines (|) in the outer margin within the criteria indicate a technical change or addition from the previous edition. Deletion indicators (→) are provided in the outer margins where a paragraph or item has been deleted if the deletion resulted from a technical change. This criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

IAS may consider alternate criteria provided the proponent submits substantiating data demonstrating that the alternate criteria are at least equivalent to the attached criteria and otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.

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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BUILDING DEPARTMENTS/CODE ENFORCEMENT AGENCIES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope: This criteria sets forth requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), accreditation of governmental entities responsible for enforcement of building and construction laws or other jurisdictional ordinances relating to enhancing the quality of life within their jurisdictions, such as fire, zoning or traffic laws.

1.2 Reference Documents

1.2.1 International Building Code (IBC), current edition, and related construction codes published by the International Code Council.

1.2.2 ISO/IEC Standard 17020, General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection.

1.2.3 Building Department Administration, by Robert E. O'Bannon, published by the International Code Council.

1.2.4 Establishing Building Permit Fees (2nd Edition) by Michael Bouse, published by the International Code Council and International Accreditation Service, Inc.

1.2.5 IAS Rules of Procedure for Building Department/Code Enforcement Agency Accreditation.

2.0 DEFINITIONS

2.1 Accreditation: Formal third-party recognition that a body fulfills specified requirements and is competent to carry out specific conformity assessment and regulatory tasks.

2.2 Accreditation Committee: A committee of government officials appointed by the IAS Board of Directors to monitor the work of and to develop accreditation criteria for IAS.

2.3 Alternate Materials and Methods of Construction: A material, design or method of construction that has been approved where the authority having jurisdiction finds that the proposed design or product is satisfactory and complies with the intent of the provisions of the code.

2.4 Appeal: Request for reconsideration of any administrative decision by the department related to its enforcement authority. Administrative decisions include:

- refusal to accept an application for issuance of permit;
- refusal to proceed with plan check or inspections;
- corrective action requests;
- refusal to agree with the designer's code interpretation;
- decisions to deny, suspend or halt construction work;

– any other action that impedes the attainment of a permit for construction or certificate of occupancy.

2.5 Applicant: An individual or corporation applying for a building construction permit or plan review in accordance with local codes or other normative documents.

2.6 Approved: Acceptable to the official having jurisdiction.

2.7 Approved Agency: An established and recognized agency regularly engaged in conducting tests or furnishing inspection services, when such agency has been approved. Accreditation by the International Accreditation Service as a testing laboratory or inspection agency meets the intent of IBC Section 1702.1 relative to approved agencies.

2.8 Board Committee on Accreditation: A committee established by the IAS Board of Directors to render accreditation decisions on the IAS Building Department/Code Enforcement Agency Accreditation program.

2.9 Building: Any structure used or intended to support or shelter any use or occupancy.

2.10 Building Department/Code Enforcement Agency: Authoritative body which performs functions related to enforcement of construction and other laws.

2.11 Building Code Administrator/Building Official/Code Official: The officer or other designated authority charged with the administration and enforcement of codes as adopted in their jurisdiction.

2.12 Certified Contractor: Any contractor who possesses a certificate of competency issued by state regulators and who is allowed to contract in any jurisdiction in the state without being required to fulfill the competency requirements of that jurisdiction.

2.13 Construction Documents: Written, graphic and pictorial documents prepared or assembled to describe the design, location and physical characteristics of a building project.

2.14 Contract Staff: A third-party individual or entity hired by the local jurisdiction to perform plan review and/or inspection services.

2.15 Control: The direction, regulation and coordination of procedures and related documents to assure consistency of operations.

2.16 External/Internal Pressures and Influences: Interference with due process of code enforcement by persons in a position of power (such as elected officials).

2.17 Historic Buildings: Buildings that are listed in or are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, or designated as historic under appropriate state or local law.

2.18 Internal Quality Audits: Internal studies to identify the extent to which documented procedures are followed and the effectiveness of current processes.

2.19 Jurisdiction: The territory over which the authority to enforce adopted codes is exercised.

2.20 Management or Operational Audits: Independent evaluations conducted by a qualified entity, at the request of the elected or appointed officials, to measure the operational consistency and overall efficiency of the department/code enforcement agency.

2.21 Management Reviews: Reviews performed by management of internal audit findings (including quality audits) to assess the organization's level of procedural conformance, identify and correct areas of nonconformance and inefficiency, and engage staff in improving processes and procedures.

2.22 Permit: An official document issued by the authority having jurisdiction which authorizes performance of a specified activity.

2.23 Quality Assurance Plan: Documents which set forth the policies and practices aimed at ensuring the quality of the organization's services.

2.24 Registered Contractor: Any contractor who has registered with the appropriate state agency pursuant to fulfilling the competency requirements in the jurisdiction for which the registration is issued. Registered contractors may contract only in such jurisdictions.

2.25 Registered Design Professionals: Individuals registered or licensed to practice their respective design professions as defined by the statutory requirements of the professional registration laws of the state or jurisdiction in which the project is to be constructed.

2.26 Service Goals: Goals set for performance in each area of service offered by the building department or code enforcement agency. Goals must be quantified (expressed as a number, rating or grade) and established in cooperation with users of department services (citizens, architects, engineers, contractors, etc.) as well as elected and appointed officials. A system must be in place to regularly measure progress in meeting service goals. As part of this system, targets should be established for improvements in three separate areas of overall service: timeliness (turnaround time); quality (error rate); and professionalism (quality of interactions with staff [e.g., knowledge, attitude, responsiveness and helpfulness of staff members] as perceived by users of department services).

2.27 Special Inspection: Inspection as herein required of the materials, installation, fabrication, erection or placement of components and connections requiring special expertise to ensure compliance with approved construction documents and referenced standards (see IBC Section 1704). Special inspection agencies are required to demonstrate competence, to the satisfaction of the

building or other code official, for inspection of the particular type of construction or operation requiring special inspection. IAS-accredited special inspection agencies satisfy the requirements of Section 1702 of the IBC.

2.28 Structure: That which is built or constructed (see "Building").

2.29 Third Party: A competent, independent entity approved by the building or other code official having jurisdiction to perform specified tasks.

3.0 CODE ENFORCEMENT— ADMINISTRATION

Information on items noted in Sections 3.1 through 3.5 must be submitted.

3.1 General Information

3.1.1 Historical and political information on administering entity: Copy of Charter; incorporation details, if any; copy of enabling legislation; organizational chart showing lines of authority within the jurisdiction; map showing boundaries of jurisdictional area.

3.1.2 Environmental and topographical information: Area (in square miles), geographical and topographical features, wind zone, flood risk zone, seismic or other geologic risk zone, and other local environmental health and safety concerns.

3.1.3 Economic and demographic information: Current residential and daytime populations; population growth trends and projections; current housing count and future-needs projection; median housing price; property tax rate; and major contributors to local economy (tourism, manufacturing, education, etc.).

3.2 General Operations

3.2.1 Department's responsibility for code enforcement and administration of zoning, transportation, storm-water, utilities (water and sewer), landscaping, fire inspections, contractor licensing, occupational licensing, etc.

3.2.2 Participation in coordination of work if zoning, transportation, storm-water, fire inspections, contractor licensing, occupational licensing, etc., are under a separate department, and how these approvals are coordinated.

3.2.3 Activities related to mitigation from exposure hazards, such as seismic, hurricanes, flooding, brushfires, other.

3.2.4 Work done on contract for other jurisdictions by local agreements.

3.2.5 Policies or statutes in place which provide code officials freedom from external/internal pressures and influences (as defined in Section 2.16) that may impair the enforcement of codes.

3.2.6 Steps taken to avoid potential conflicts of interest.

3.2.7 Evidence of establishment of standard operating procedures; details of the process in place

to control uniformity of operating procedures, procedural documents, and forms (See Section 2.15).

3.2.8 Accessibility of information and records, minimum retention times for records, and details on safe storage of records.

3.2.9 Control of access to records: safeguards in place to prevent unauthorized access or modifications to records.

3.2.10 Evidence of a comprehensive quality assurance plan (as defined in Section 2.23); description of annual internal quality audits and management reviews (as defined in Section 2.18).

3.2.11 Copies of reports of management or operational audits (as defined in Section 2.20) if conducted within the past six years.

3.2.12 Facilities and equipment available to employees and contract personnel (i.e., books; manuals; and tools, gauges, meters and equipment used for plan review and inspection functions).

3.2.13 Method of identification and calibration of available tools and equipment used, as applicable.

3.2.14 Availability of transportation equipment; policies on use and maintenance.

3.2.15 Details on computer software and programs in use.

3.2.16 Availability of information technology (IT) support.

3.2.17 Validation procedure for computer programs used for plan checking.

3.2.18 Availability of, and policies guiding appropriate employee and contract personnel use of, wireless voice and data communication, such as cell phones, wireless networks, etc.

3.2.19 Building department's access to legal counsel and prosecution support.

3.2.20 Awareness programs and community outreach activities conducted by the department.

3.2.21 Description of all documents available to the public through the department.

3.3 Staff Information

The building department shall have a sufficient number of permanent or contract staff with the range of expertise to carry out its normal functions.

3.3.1 Organizational chart providing employee names and titles for all full- and part-time staff positions within the code enforcement organization.

3.3.2 Policies and procedures on ethical behavior involving conflicts of interest and job performance.

3.3.3 Training requirements for code enforcement agency's (building department's) personnel in post-disaster assessment and posting of structures.

3.3.4 Code Officials

3.3.4.1 Job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions, including information on minimum qualifications, education and certification/licensing requirements. Detailed criteria on qualification/certification and/or licensing requirements for contract code officials, if applicable.

3.3.4.2 Additional qualification requirements over and above the state or local requirements, if any, for code officials, such as P.E. license, contractor license, etc.

3.3.4.3 Methods of hiring, training and supervising code officials; methods of hiring, training and supervision of contract code officials, if applicable.

3.3.4.4 Verification of individuals' qualifications, education, etc.

3.3.4.5 Current standings, and expiration dates, of required certification(s) issued by a national construction code promulgation organization, such as the International Code Council, or other acceptable certification organization, as determined by local ordinance or state laws; for certified staff.

3.3.4.6 Performance evaluations which provide for the establishment of clearly defined performance goals.

3.3.4.7 State-mandated and locally mandated minimum continuing education requirements; and information on jurisdictional continuing education requirements, over and above state and local minimum requirements.

3.3.4.8 Participation of individuals in code development activities, with a description of the levels of participation.

3.3.5 Administrative and Permitting Staff

3.3.5.1 Job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions, including information on minimum qualifications and education requirements; and certification requirements (such as requirements for certified permit technicians).

3.3.5.2 Methods of hiring, training and supervising.

3.3.5.3 Verification of individuals' qualifications, education, etc.

3.3.5.4 Current standings, and expiration dates, of required certification(s) issued by a national construction code promulgation organization, such as the International Code Council, or other acceptable certification organization, as determined by local ordinance or state laws; for certified staff.

3.3.5.5 Performance evaluations which provide for the establishment of clearly defined performance goals.

3.3.5.6 State-mandated and locally mandated minimum continuing education requirements; and information on jurisdictional continuing education

requirements, over and above state and local minimum requirements.

3.3.5.7 Participation of individuals in code development activities, with a description of the levels of participation.

3.3.6 Plan Reviewers

3.3.6.1 Number of plan reviewers currently employed, by category; i.e., single-trade, such as structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, etc., or multi-trade.

3.3.6.2 Percentage of plan reviews completed by contract staff.

3.3.6.3 Bonding requirements for contract plan reviewers, if any.

3.3.6.4 Job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions, including information on minimum qualifications, education and certification/licensing requirements. Detailed criteria on qualification/certification and/or licensing requirements for contract plan reviewers, if applicable.

3.3.6.5 Additional qualification requirements over and above the state or local requirements, if any, such as P.E. license, etc.

3.3.6.6 Information on registered design professionals (i.e., on staff, full or part time).

3.3.6.7 Methods of hiring, training and supervising plan reviewers; and methods of hiring, training and supervising contract plan reviewers, if applicable.

3.3.6.8 Verification of individuals' qualifications, education, etc.

3.3.6.9 Current standings, and expiration dates, of required certification(s) issued by a national construction code promulgation organization, such as the International Code Council, or other acceptable certification organization, as determined by local ordinance or state laws; for certified staff.

3.3.6.10 Performance evaluations which provide for the establishment of clearly defined performance goals.

3.3.6.11 State-mandated and locally mandated minimum continuing education requirements; and information on jurisdictional continuing education requirements, over and above state and local minimum requirements.

3.3.6.12 Participation of individuals in code development activities, with a description of the levels of participation.

3.3.7 Inspectors

3.3.7.1 Number of inspectors currently employed, by category; i.e., single-trade, such as structural, mechanical, electrical, etc., or multi-trade.

3.3.7.2 Number and types of contract and private inspectors employed, i.e., single-trade inspectors, multi-trade inspectors.

3.3.7.3 Percentage of inspections completed by contract staff.

3.3.7.4 Job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions, including information on minimum qualifications, education and certification/licensing requirements. Detailed criteria on qualification/certification and/or licensing requirements for contract inspectors or private inspection agencies, if applicable.

3.3.7.5 Additional qualification requirements over and above the state or local requirements, if any.

3.3.7.6 Methods of hiring, training and supervising inspectors; and methods of hiring, training and supervising contract inspectors and private agencies, if applicable.

3.3.7.7 Verification of individuals' qualifications, education, etc.

3.3.7.8 Current standings, and expiration dates, of required certification(s) issued by a national construction code promulgation organization, such as the International Code Council, or other acceptable certification organization, as determined by local ordinance or state laws; for all certified staff. Jurisdictions located in coastal areas and flood plains must provide information on the number of inspectors holding ICC Coastal and Flood Plain Construction Inspector certifications.

3.3.7.9 Performance evaluations which provide for the establishment of clearly defined performance goals.

3.3.7.10 State-mandated and locally mandated minimum continuing education requirements; and information on jurisdictional continuing education requirements, over and above state and local minimum requirements.

3.3.7.11 Participation of individuals in code development activities, with a description of the levels of participation.

3.4 Permitting Information

3.4.1 Process for issuance of permits.

3.4.2 Coordination of permitting process with other government departments.

3.4.3 Process for establishment of permit fees

3.4.4 Number of permits issued in the last 12 months, by category:

3.4.4.1 Residential Permits: new, alterations, additions; single family and multifamily.

3.4.4.2 Commercial Permits: new, alterations, additions.

3.4.4.3 Construction Type: number of permits issued for each construction type and occupancy classification (including mixed-use occupancies).

3.4.4.4 Permit Type: number issued by category, such as building, mechanical, electrical, plumbing, fuel gas, etc., or combination/master permits.

3.4.5 Square footage most typical of buildings permitted in the past 12 months; square footage of the largest building permitted in the last 12 months; story height of the tallest building permitted in the last 12 months.

3.4.6 Historic buildings: details of permit process, number of permits issued in the last 12 months.

3.4.7 Service goals for permitting, established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.26).

3.4.8 Procedure and process for dealing with expired or inactive permits.

3.5 Department Budget

3.5.1 Budget for code enforcement for the past fiscal year — Revenue versus Expenditure.

3.5.2 Operating budget type, i.e., General Fund, Enterprise Fund, other means of funding.

3.5.3 Financial audit method, i.e., internal or third-party.

3.5.4 Liability exposure, i.e., self-insured, exemption by sovereign immunity, others.

4.0 CONSTRUCTION CODES

The following details are necessary:

4.1 Evidence of adoption of current national construction codes (i.e., within the last two published editions) or a state-mandated code based on a current national construction code.

4.2 Procedures followed for local amendments to any administrative provisions of the building code, fire code and related construction codes.

4.3 Procedures followed for local amendments to any technical provisions of the building code, fire code and related construction codes.

4.4 Method used by the jurisdiction to enforce applicable Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements.

5.0 PLAN REVIEWS

The following information is necessary:

5.1 Policies, procedures and checklists for plan reviews.

5.2 Number of reviews done annually, by category, such as residential buildings, commercial buildings, site development plan reviews, and others, such as fire sprinklers, alarms, etc.

5.3 Description of system used for tracking and coordinating plan review activities.

5.4 Department requirements for review of building plans for structural parameters.

5.5 Details of partial plan approvals, if offered by the jurisdiction.

5.6 Number of plan reviews done by department staff in the last 12 months that resulted in rejection or correction of designs: residential; commercial.

Number of plan reviews done by contract staff in the last 12 months that resulted in rejection or correction of designs: residential; commercial.

5.7 Typical reasons for rejections or correction of designs.

5.8 Policy and procedure for approving alternate materials and methods of construction.

5.9 Service goals for plan review, established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.26).

6.0 VERIFICATION OF PROFESSIONAL CREDENTIALS/LICENSES

Details on the following are required:

6.1 Method of verifying builder and contractor licenses and insurance.

6.2 Verification of licenses of registered design professionals.

6.3 Verification of special inspector/special inspection agency credentials.

7.0 INSPECTIONS

The following details are necessary:

7.1 Policies, procedures and checklists for inspections.

7.2 Number and types of inspections done in the last 12 months, by category, such as structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, fuel gas, fire and others. Percentage of work rejected and corrected: structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, fuel gas, fire and others.

7.3 Method of tracking rejections and corrections on individual inspector basis, if any.

7.4 Typical reasons for rejections and corrections.

7.5 Procedures for overseeing work done by private inspection providers hired by owners.

7.6 Use of and compliance with IBC Chapter 17, Special Inspections.

7.6.1 Use of and requirements for special inspectors, structural observers, approved fabricators/welders.

7.6.2 Accreditation requirements or field monitoring of special inspection agency work.

7.6.3 Procedures for acceptance of approved fabricators.

7.6.4 Procedures for approving third-party inspection and testing agencies.

7.6.5 Special inspector reporting requirements.

7.7 Final inspections conducted by the department.

7.8 Clear, concise and accurate reporting of inspection results. Procedures in place to guard against the alteration of inspection report records.

7.9 Service goals for inspection, established with stakeholder input (as defined in Section 2.26).

8.0 COMPLAINTS AND APPEALS

Details on the following are required:

8.1 Documented procedure in place to record, investigate and resolve complaints against contractors, work without permits and other similar violations.

8.2 Establishment of, and rules of procedure for, board of appeals as required by Section 112 of the IBC or Section 108 of the *International Fire Code*; or documented procedure for hearing and deciding appeals in accordance with other adopted national construction codes.

9.0 CERTIFICATE OF OCCUPANCY

Methods of issuance of Certificate of Occupancy (CO) or Certificate of Completion (CC) or temporary certificate of occupancy must be described.

10.0 ON-SITE EVALUATIONS AND ACCREDITATION

On-site evaluations are required to determine the degree of compliance with the accreditation criteria. A team of trained evaluators and subject matter experts, led by a certified evaluation team leader, shall visit the jurisdiction to conduct a thorough review of the organization and its code-enforcement practices. The evaluation team will interview leadership (such as mayor, city manager, city attorney, or county administrator), other department heads, staff and stakeholders.

10.1 **Pre-evaluation:** Prior to scheduling the full on-site evaluation, IAS will schedule a two-day visit to the applicant building department/code enforcement agency by the lead evaluator and a subject matter expert, to review and comment on its degree of compliance with the AC251 criteria.

10.2 **Full Evaluation:** In consultation with the applicant building department/code enforcement agency, the team leader schedules the full on-site evaluation by a team of trained peer evaluators to verify compliance with the accreditation criteria. Peer evaluation procedures will be established by the IAS Board of Directors.

Upon conclusion of the on-site visit, the evaluation team leader provides the applicant agency with verbal feedback, with specific information on major nonconformances, if any. Within 30 days of the evaluation, a formal workbook is submitted to IAS by the team leader for transmission to the applicant agency.

10.3 **Follow-up Evaluation:** In some cases, the team leader may recommend to IAS that a follow-up evaluation take place to verify implementation of corrective measures taken by the applicant agency in response to the full evaluation. Typically, follow-up evaluations include the team leader and another member for one or two days on-site.

10.4 **Full Accreditation:** If the final workbook submitted by the IAS evaluation team leader indicates full compliance with requirements, the applicant agency is placed on a list for final review by the IAS Board Committee on Accreditation (BCA) for issuance of the formal accreditation certificate. Accredited agencies will be subject to an on-site surveillance evaluation at the conclusion of the initial year of accreditation.

10.5 **Conditional Accreditation:** At the discretion of the Board Committee on Accreditation, conditional accreditation may be granted to an applicant who is substantially in compliance with the accreditation criteria and who has shown evidence of a clear action plan to address unresolved evaluation comments/concerns. The terms of conditional accreditation shall be determined by the Board Committee on Accreditation. Conditional accreditation shall not exceed one year.

Agencies will be subject to an on-site compliance evaluation, at the conclusion of the year of conditional accreditation, at which time the Board Committee on Accreditation will re-evaluate the agency's accreditation status.

11.0 ANNUAL REPORTS AND RE-EVALUATION

To maintain accredited status, the accredited agency must, at all times, be in compliance with the rules of procedure and the accreditation criteria. Annual reports, addressing key elements of the criteria, must be prepared by the accredited agency and submitted to IAS. Submitted information must also include changes in key staff, changes in facilities or operating procedures, or any problems that could potentially impact the entity's accredited status.

At the end of every three-year term commencing from the initial date of accreditation, the accredited agency will be subject to on-site full re-evaluation by IAS. ▪