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## ***NEWS RELEASE***

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### **Florida Cities Earn National Building Department Accreditation**

The cities of West Palm Beach and Tallahassee are the first municipalities in Florida to earn national accreditation by the International Accreditation Service (IAS), demonstrating competency in their professional services and technical abilities based on industry best practices. Both cities earned Building Department Accreditation (BDA), signifying they operate under the highest standards.

“We’re very proud of this accomplishment and have already realized tangible benefits,” said West Palm Beach Construction Services Department Building Official Neil Melick. “The IAS accreditation process allowed us to introspectively define areas of improvement and introduce new tools to increase our efficiency.”

The popular and continually growing coastal community of West Palm Beach supports a population of more than 100,000. The building department issues more than 10,000 permits and performs approximately 40,000 inspections a year with 27 inspectors and 16 plan reviewers.

Melick is particularly pleased with the newly implemented peer review program that emerged during the accreditation process. “This program has fostered uniformity and consistency throughout the organization,” Melick said. “The model includes a formalized mentoring program for all aspects of our business from permitting and plan review to inspections and front counter customer service. We have become more consistent in our service on all levels.”

As the capital of Florida, the city of Tallahassee supports a population of 177,000. The building department issues 16,500 permits and conducts approximately 77,000 inspections annually with 15 inspectors and 15 plan examiners supported by 8 permit technicians.

Glenn Dodson, Deputy Building Official for the Tallahassee Growth Management Department Building Inspection Division, says his organization has realized similar benefits from the IAS accreditation process.

“We knew we were performing well,” Dodson explained, “and the accreditation allowed us to see how we measured up to the national standards and criteria.”

As part of the IAS BDA requirements, the Tallahassee Building Inspection Division implemented an internal audit process to monitor plan review and inspection activities.

“This internal audit process required by the IAS Accreditation Criteria AC251 has helped improve communication amongst all of our teams making us stronger, more consistent in our service,” said Dodson. “We believe that all building departments should be held to a higher standard. Accreditation will help us to better ourselves and therefore better serve our community.”

“We’re proud to recognize both of these building departments and the hard work they’ve put into achieving this accreditation,” said IAS President Chuck Ramani. “Each underwent rigorous assessments to verify that it operates under the highest ethical, legal and technical standards while providing enhanced life safety and property protection.”

To achieve IAS Building Department Accreditation, both departments were assessed across 13 distinct categories of accreditation criteria: basic jurisdictional information, department staff, permitting, budget, construction codes, plan reviews, professional credentials/licenses, inspections, certificates of occupancy, on-site evaluations, annual reports, reevaluation, and complaints/appeals. IAS evaluators carefully assessed critical elements of the building departments including customer service, code interpretation and enforcement, and fiscal strength, expertise and compliance with the IAS Accreditation Criteria for Building Departments/Code Enforcement Agencies. The on-site teams also visited construction sites to appraise the performance of the city’s inspection process.

International Accreditation Service, a subsidiary of the International Code Council, has offered Building Department Accreditation since January 2005. Several major cities across the nation are currently going through the accreditation process.

The nation’s leading provider of building department accreditation, IAS also assesses and accredits testing and calibration laboratories, fabricator inspection programs, special inspection agencies and workforce training and curriculum development agencies. It is a subsidiary of the International Code Council, a membership association dedicated to building safety and fire prevention that develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states that adopt codes choose the International Codes developed by the International Code Council.