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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR BUILDING CODE REGULATORY AGENCIES AND THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDERS

AC251

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PREFACE

The attached accreditation criteria have been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced herein. The criteria were developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and are effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with these criteria. If the criteria are 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. These 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 CODE REGULATORY AGENCIES AND THIRD-PARTY SERVICE PROVIDERS

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. **Scope:** These criteria set forth the requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), accreditation of (1) governmental agencies (i.e., building code regulatory agencies) responsible for the enforcement of building and construction laws or other jurisdictional ordinances (such as fire, zoning or traffic laws) related to enhancing the quality of life within their jurisdictions and (2) nongovernmental third-party permitting, plan review and inspection service providers (i.e., third-party service providers). These criteria supplement the IAS Rules of Procedure for Building Department/Code Enforcement Agencies Accreditation.
- 1.2. **Normative and Reference Documents:** Publications listed below refer to current editions (unless otherwise stated).
 - 1.2.1. *International Building Code (IBC)* and related construction codes published by the International Code Council.
 - 1.2.2. *British Columbia Building Code (BCBC)* and *Vancouver Building By-law*, current editions.
 - 1.2.3. *Building Department Administration*, by Robert E. O'Bannon, published by the International Code Council.
 - 1.2.4. IAS Rules of Procedure for Building Department/Code Enforcement Agencies Accreditation.
 - 1.2.5. National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) Regulations 44 C.F.R Parts 59 and 60.

2. 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. **Accreditation Review Committee (ARC):** A committee established by the IAS Board of Directors to render accreditation decisions on the IAS Building Department/Code Enforcement Agency Accreditation program.
- 2.4. **Alternate Materials and Methods of Construction/Alternate Solutions:** 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.

- 2.5. **Appeal:** Request for reconsideration of any administrative decision by the agency related to its enforcement authority. Administrative decisions include:
- 2.5.1. Refusal to accept an application for issuance of permit;
 - 2.5.2. Refusal to proceed with plan check or inspections;
 - 2.5.3. Corrective action requests;
 - 2.5.4. Refusal to agree with the designer's code interpretation;
 - 2.5.5. Decisions to deny, suspend or halt construction work;
 - 2.5.6. Any other action that impedes the attainment of a permit for construction or certificate of occupancy.
- 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. **Building:** Any structure used or intended to support or shelter any use or occupancy.
- 2.9. **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.
- 2.10. **Building Department/Code Enforcement Agency:** Authoritative body which performs functions related to enforcement of construction and other laws.
- 2.11. **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.
- 2.12. **Complaint:** Expression of dissatisfaction, other than appeal, by any person or organization, concerning some matter related to the agency, where a response is expected.
- 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/Heritage Buildings:** Buildings that are listed in or are eligible for listing in the U.S. National Register of Historic Places, or designated as historic under appropriate state or local law (In British Columbia: Buildings that are defined by the *British Columbia Building*

Code as legally protected or officially recognized as a heritage property by the Provincial or local government.)

- 2.18. **Internal Quality Audits:** Internal systems and operations reviews to identify the extent to which documented procedures are followed and the effectiveness of current processes.
- 2.19. **Jurisdiction:** The geographic area 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 and external 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. **Permit Applicant:** An individual or corporation applying for a building construction permit or plan review in accordance with local codes or other normative documents.
- 2.24. **Quality Assurance Plan/Activities:** The practices aimed at ensuring the quality of the organization's services through the observation of work in progress or sampling of completed work.
- 2.25. **Quality Assurance Program:** The agency's system for maintaining minimum quality levels of service through a collection of self-imposed standards through activities such as internal quality audits, document creation and control, management reviews, etc.
- 2.26. **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.
- 2.27. **Registered Design Professionals/Registered 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. (In British Columbia: Individuals registered or licensed to practice their respective design professions as defined in the BCBC as a person who is registered or licensed to practice as an architect under the Architects Act or a person who is registered or licensed to practice as a professional engineer under the Engineers and Geosciences Act.)
- 2.28. **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 agency 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 or third-party services).

Note: A quality (error rate) service goal with zero life-safety errors shall be established for plan review and inspection functions.

- 2.29. **Special Inspection/Field Review:** 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. (In British Columbia: Inspection required of material, installation, fabrication, erection or placement of components and connections requiring expertise to ensure compliance with approved construction documents and reference standards shall be conducted by Registered Professionals or by consultants approved by the Authority Having Jurisdiction.)
- 2.30. **Standard Operating Procedures:** Established or prescribed methods to be followed routinely for the performance of designated operations or in designated situations.
- 2.31. **Structure:** That which is built or constructed (see "Building").
- 2.32. **Third Party:** A competent, independent entity approved by the building or other code official having jurisdiction to perform specified tasks.
- 2.33. **Third Party Service Provider (TPP):** Non-governmental third-party permitting, plan review and inspection service providers.

3. ELIGIBILITY

Accreditation services are available to building departments, regulatory agencies and third-party service providers that provide any of the following services (or any combination thereof):

- 3.1. Permitting;
- 3.2. Plan review;
- 3.3. Inspections;
- 3.4. Code enforcement;
- 3.5. Construction code adoption, promulgation and/or oversight.

4. REQUIRED BASIC INFORMATION

- 4.1. Building code regulatory agencies and third-party service providers must demonstrate compliance with the following requirements:
 - 4.1.1. The requirements of these accreditation criteria;
 - 4.1.2. Building code regulatory agencies and third-party service providers must comply with the IAS Rules of Procedure for Building Department/Code Enforcement Agencies Accreditation.
 - 4.1.3. Building code regulatory agencies must comply with Annex A of this document.
 - 4.1.4. Third-party providers of building department services must comply with Annex B of this document.
 - 4.1.5. Building departments in British Columbia, Canada, must comply with Annex C of this document.
- 4.2. All applicants must comply with the following sections of this document:
 - 4.2.1. **Code Enforcement—Administration**
 - 4.2.1.1. **General Operations**
 - 4.2.1.1.1. Effectively coordinate work with other related functions, such as zoning, transportation, storm-water, floodplain management, fire inspections, contractor licensing, occupational licensing, etc., when these functions are under separate departments or agencies.
 - 4.2.1.1.2. Have emergency response plans (coordinated with other departments, as applicable), to identify damaged buildings and conduct safety inspections following a natural hazard event.
 - 4.2.1.1.3. Have policies or statutes in place which provide code officials freedom from external/internal pressures and influences (as defined in Section 2) that could possibly impair the enforcement of codes.
 - 4.2.1.1.4. Provide periodic training to staff regarding avoidance of potential conflicts of interest.
 - 4.2.1.1.5. Establish and maintain standard operating procedures along with a process to control uniformity of operating procedures, procedural documents, and forms (as defined in Section 2).
 - 4.2.1.1.6. Ensure safe storage and retention of records in accordance with all applicable laws and ordinances.
 - 4.2.1.1.7. Prevent unauthorized access or modifications to records (such as inspection results, etc.).
 - 4.2.1.1.8. Establish and maintain a comprehensive quality assurance program (as defined in Section 2) which includes, at a minimum, the following components:
 - 4.2.1.1.8.1. Quality assurance activities (as defined in Section 2).

- 4.2.1.1.8.2. Annual or more frequent internal quality audits (as defined in Section 2).
 - 4.2.1.1.8.3. Management reviews (as defined in Section 2). Minutes of management review meetings shall be retained as evidence.
 - 4.2.1.1.9. Demonstrate that employees conduct duties in accordance with policies and procedures.
 - 4.2.1.1.10. Furnish findings of external reviews of management and/or operations (as defined in management or operational audits in Section 2), if any, that were conducted within the past six years.
 - 4.2.1.1.11. Provide adequate facilities and equipment to employees and contract personnel (i.e., books; manuals; and tools, gauges, meters and equipment used for plan review and inspection functions) and replace defective equipment in a timely manner.
 - 4.2.1.1.12. Identify which tools and equipment require calibration and maintain records of required calibrations.
 - 4.2.1.1.13. Establish and maintain policies guiding use and maintenance of transportation equipment.
 - 4.2.1.1.14. Provide adequate computer software/programs to meet its goals.
 - 4.2.1.1.15. Provide adequate information technology (IT) support.
 - 4.2.1.1.16. Utilize software used to conduct plan reviews in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations.
 - 4.2.1.1.17. Control the use of wireless voice and data communication, such as cell phones, wireless networks, etc.
 - 4.2.1.1.18. Have access to legal counsel and prosecution support.
 - 4.2.1.1.19. Conduct awareness programs and community outreach activities.
 - 4.2.1.1.20. Control all documents made available to the public.
 - 4.2.1.1.21. Demonstrate openness to innovative practices in code enforcement and operations.
- 4.2.1.2. Personnel**
- 4.2.1.2.1. Have an organizational chart providing employee names and titles for all full- and part-time staff positions within the code enforcement/third party organization which shows total number of employees.
 - 4.2.1.2.2. Have job descriptions of full-time and part-time staff positions which include minimum qualifications, education, training, technical knowledge, skills, experience, and certification/licensing requirements (including equivalent qualifications/certifications for contract staff, if applicable).
 - 4.2.1.2.3. List additional qualification requirements *over and above* state or local requirements, if any (such as P.E. license, Registered Professional license,

contractor license, Certified Floodplain Manager, etc.), and demonstrate that staff or contracted staff meet those additional requirements.

- 4.2.1.2.4. Follow established procedures for hiring, training and supervising staff (and contract staff, if applicable).
- 4.2.1.2.5. Verify individuals' qualifications, education, etc.
- 4.2.1.2.6. Track 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 or provincial laws, for certified staff.
- 4.2.1.2.7. Perform annual employee performance evaluations in which clearly defined performance/staff development goals are established and progress monitored.
- 4.2.1.2.8. Maintain awareness of state- or provincially-mandated and locally-mandated minimum continuing education requirements and shall encourage staff to participate in continuing education.
- 4.2.1.2.9. Encourage staff participation in code development activities.
- 4.2.1.2.10. Employ or contract for staff who are qualified to perform post-disaster assessments and perform damage determinations in flood hazard areas.
- 4.2.1.2.11. Employ or contract appropriate number of plan reviewers needed in each category (e.g., structural, mechanical, plumbing, electrical, multi-trade).
- 4.2.1.2.12. Employ or contract for the appropriate number of inspectors needed in each category (e.g., structural, mechanical, electrical, multi-trade).
- 4.2.1.2.13. Document bonding requirements when contract plan reviewers are used.

4.2.1.3. Permitting

- 4.2.1.3.1. Process for issuance of permits shall be controlled.
- 4.2.1.3.2. Coordination of permitting process with internal and external government departments shall be documented and followed.
- 4.2.1.3.3. Process for establishment of permit and related fees and collection of payments shall be controlled.
- 4.2.1.3.4. If buildings, in the jurisdiction served, have been designated as "historic," a permit process for historic buildings shall be in place and followed.
- 4.2.1.3.5. Have established service goals for permitting (as defined in Section 2) which have been developed in consultation with stakeholders. Agency shall regularly monitor performance toward meeting stated goals and shall take remedial actions as necessary.
- 4.2.1.3.6. Follow a procedure for resolving expired or inactive permits.

4.2.1.4. Agency Budget

- 4.2.1.4.1. Budget shall take into consideration risks affecting services provided and shall be adequate to achieve and maintain service goals as defined in Section 2.
- 4.2.1.4.2. Undergo regular financial audits (e.g., internal or third-party).
- 4.2.1.4.3. Have adequate liability protection for building department operations, (e.g., self-insured, exemption by sovereign immunity, etc.).

4.2.2. Plan Reviews

- 4.2.2.1. Policies, procedures and checklists for plan reviews shall be controlled. Plan review checklists must list typical major errors (as identified under service goals for plan review).
- 4.2.2.2. System used for tracking and coordinating plan review activities shall be controlled.
- 4.2.2.3. Procedures for partial plan approvals and deferred submittals, if offered by the jurisdiction, shall be controlled.
- 4.2.2.4. Typical reasons for rejections or correction of designs shall be tracked in order to identify trends as opportunities for improvement.
- 4.2.2.5. Policy and procedure for approving alternate materials and methods of construction (called "alternate solutions" in British Columbia) shall be controlled.
- 4.2.2.6. Have established service goals for plan reviews as defined in Section 2 which have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and regularly monitor performance toward meeting stated goals and take remedial actions as necessary.

4.2.3. Verification of Professional Credentials/Licenses

- 4.2.3.1. Policy and procedure for verifying builder and contractor licenses and insurance shall be controlled.
- 4.2.3.2. Policy and procedure for verification of licenses of registered design professionals shall be controlled.
- 4.2.3.3. Policy and procedure for verification of special inspector/special inspection agency credentials shall be controlled.

4.2.4. Inspections

- 4.2.4.1. Policies and procedures for inspections, including checklists, if used, shall be controlled. If checklists are used, checklists must contain all major errors (as identified in the service goals for permitting).
- 4.2.4.2. Rejections and corrections for inspections shall be tracked on an individual inspector basis.
- 4.2.4.3. Typical reasons for rejections and corrections shall be tracked in order to identify trends as opportunities for improvement.
- 4.2.4.4. Policy and procedures for overseeing work done by private inspection providers hired by owners shall be controlled.

- 4.2.4.5. Policies and procedures concerning final inspections conducted by the agency shall be established and controlled.
- 4.2.4.6. Policies and procedures requiring the clear, concise and accurate reporting of inspection results shall be established and controlled.
- 4.2.4.7. Have established service goals for inspections (as defined in Section 2) which have been developed in consultation with stakeholders and shall regularly monitor performance toward meeting stated goals and shall take remedial actions as necessary.
- 4.2.5. **Complaints and Appeals**
 - 4.2.5.1. There shall be a controlled procedure in place to record, investigate and resolve complaints against the code enforcement/TPP organization or complaints about contractors, work without permits, building bylaw violations, and other similar violations.
 - 4.2.5.2. There shall be evidence of the establishment of, and rules of procedure for, a board of appeals as required by Section 113 of the IBC (or Section 108 of the *International Fire Code*, if applicable); or procedure for hearing and deciding appeals in accordance with other adopted national construction codes.
- 4.2.6. **Certificate of Occupancy**
 - 4.2.6.1. There shall be a controlled policy and procedure for the issuance of a certificate of occupancy (CO) or certificate of completion (CC) or temporary certificate of occupancy.
 - 4.2.6.2. For construction in high-risk flood zones, Elevation Certificates shall be collected prior to issuance of the certificate of occupancy. Elevation Certificates shall be permanently retained.

5. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION (AS APPLICABLE)

Any other state, provincial and national regulatory requirements.

6. LINKS TO ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

- 6.1. IAS – www.iasonline.org
- 6.2. International Code Council – www.iccsafe.org

These criteria were previously issued September 2004, May 2005, October 2005, August 2006, May 2007, April 2008, September 2008, May 2010, May 2011, August 2012, June 2013, February 2015 and October 2015

ANNEX A

REQUIREMENTS

Building Departments must comply with Section 4 of this document (as applicable to the services provided) as well as the requirements of Annex A.

- A1. If the department performs work for other jurisdictions by local agreement, a current contract defining the scope and responsibilities shall be in effect.
- A2. Department shall have addressed negative findings (if any) identified in the department's most recent FEMA or State Community Assistance Visit report.
- A3. Department shall establish valid contracts with third-party firms, or individuals, for any outsourced activities. These firms and individuals must operate under the building department's management system and statutory/regulatory requirements applicable to the specific project(s). Department shall make permit applicants aware of the functions that may be outsourced.
- A4. Department shall adopt and enforce current national construction codes (i.e., within the last two published editions) or a state-mandated code based on a national construction code.
Note: The accreditation certificate for accredited agencies will reflect the editions of the various codes in effect during the full evaluation.
- A5. Procedures for adopting local amendments to administrative provisions of the building and related construction codes shall be controlled.
- A6. Procedures for adopting local amendments to any technical provisions of the building and related construction codes shall be controlled.
- A7. Use of and compliance with IBC Chapter 17, Special Inspections, or the equivalent requirements of other duly adopted national construction code shall be demonstrated unless otherwise excluded from adopted code.
 - A7.1. Policies and procedures concerning the use of and requirements for special inspectors, structural observers, and approved fabricators/welders shall be established and controlled.
 - A7.2. Policies and procedures concerning accreditation requirements or field monitoring of special inspection agency work shall be established and controlled.

- A7.3. Policies and procedures concerning acceptance of approved fabricators shall be established and controlled.
- A7.4. Policies and procedures concerning the approval of third-party inspection and testing agencies shall be established and controlled.
- A7.5. Policies and procedures concerning special inspector reporting requirements shall be established and controlled.

ANNEX B

REQUIREMENTS

Third-party Providers of Building Department Services must comply with Section 4 of this document (as applicable to the services provided) as well as the requirements of Annex B.

- B1. List of duly adopted construction codes used as a basis for the services provided by the third-party service provider shall be provided.

- B2. Procedures followed for maintaining awareness of local amendments to any administrative provisions of the building code, fire code and related construction codes shall be documented.

- B3. Procedures followed for maintaining awareness of local amendments to any technical provisions of the building code, fire code and related construction codes shall be documented.

- B4. Method for implementation of applicable Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) requirements shall be provided.

- B5. Use of and compliance with IBC Chapter 17, Special Inspections, or the equivalent requirements of other duly adopted national construction code shall be demonstrated unless otherwise excluded from adopted code.
 - B5.1. Policies and procedures concerning the use of and requirements for special inspectors, structural observers, and approved fabricators/welders shall be established and controlled.
 - B5.2. Policies and procedures concerning accreditation requirements or field monitoring of special inspection agency work shall be established and controlled.
 - B5.3. Policies and procedures concerning acceptance of approved fabricators shall be established and controlled.
 - B5.4. Policies and procedures concerning the approval of third-party inspection and testing agencies shall be established and controlled.
 - B5.5. Policies and procedures concerning special inspector reporting requirements shall be established and controlled.

ANNEX C

REQUIREMENTS

Building Departments in British Columbia, Canada, must comply with Section 4 of this document (as applicable to the services provided) as well as the requirements of Annex C.

- C1. Evidence shall be provided of adoption of current Provincial Building Code or sections thereof or the *Vancouver Building By-law*.
- C2. Construction-related and building bylaws shall be provided.
- C3. Process for verification of areas of practice for registered professionals shall be documented and followed.
- C4. Process for verification of credentials of agencies/individuals conducting field review shall be documented and followed.
- C5. Use of and compliance with regulatory requirements regarding field review (as defined Special Inspection/Field Review in Section 2), shall be demonstrated.
 - C5.1. Use of and requirements for registered professionals and consultants shall be documented.
 - C5.2. Procedures for approving third-party inspection and testing agencies shall be documented.
 - C5.3. Field review reporting requirements, including collection of letters of assurance as required by British Columbia Building Code and applicable Building Bylaw(s), shall be documented.
- C6. There shall be evidence of the establishment of, and rules of procedure for, an appeals process.