

SEAM

STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS ASSOCIATION OF MAINE



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January 10, 2008

This document was prepared to represent the position of the Structural Engineers Association of Maine (SEAM) on the "Building Codes Resolve 46, Draft Recommendation Proposal" dated December 31, 2007. SEAM was founded in 1991 to promote the growth of Structural Engineers practicing in the State of Maine. In 2007, 120 members participated in our organization. SEAM is also a member organization of the National Council of Structural Engineers Associations (NCSEA) and participates in NCSEA's annual conference. Note that this statement is not final; we anticipate our position will evolve with the legislative process.

SEAM commends the efforts of the Maine State Legislature, the Business, Research and Economic Development Committee and the Building Codes Implementation Committee for their work to create a state wide building Code. SEAM recommends that the State of Maine adopt and maintain the most current version of the International Code Series in its entirety as a state wide building code. We believe that the adoption of the International Codes is critical for the safety of our communities and integrity of our profession. These codes will ensure uniformity in construction throughout the state. The resulting quality will be an investment in the value of the state's infrastructure.

In reviewing the Draft, we have several comments and concerns regarding the document. Our comments include the following items:

1. SEAM recommends that a specific mechanism for adoption of updated IBC standards be incorporated into the text. We recommend the following language regarding the adoption of updated ICC Codes:

The Technical Building Codes Board (TBCB) shall review and adopt the latest edition of the IBC, IRC, and IEBC within 12 months of the release of a new version.

2. The stability of a building's primary structure is paramount to life safety, and as such SEAM recommends that a licensed engineer experienced in the field of structural engineering perform plan review for primary structural components in design documents for public and commercial projects. We recommend the following language regarding the review of structural documents.

A structural peer review, paid for by the structure owner shall be performed on all projects deemed not minor in nature. A standard fee schedule for peer review shall be established based on the project size and complexity. The peer review shall be treated as a recommendation to the Structural Engineer of Record. Ultimate responsibility for the Structural Design shall remain that of the Structural Engineer of Record.

3. We recommend that the Special Inspections program outlined in Chapter 17 of the IBC code be specifically referenced in the State's inspections requirements for the inspections of primary building structural components for public and commercial buildings. Further, we recommend that the Structural Engineer of Record be designated to prepare the Structural Statement of Special Inspections and perform the inspections for the structural portions of this program.

The Council of American Structural Engineers (CASE) document entitled "Guide to Special Inspections and Quality Assurances" references the findings of the U.S. House of Representatives on Investigations and Oversight following the 1981 collapse of the Hyatt Regency walkway in Kansas City. The subcommittee recommended that *"Professional Organizations, such as the Building Code Officials and Code Administrators International, the International Conference of Building Officials, and the Southern Building Code Conference International, should make every effort to ensure that provisions are written into building codes and adopted in public forum which make on-site presence of the structural engineer mandatory during the construction of structural components on public facilities."*

Inclusion of this requirement is an important and powerful step to improve building safety, to protect owner's investments, and to strengthen construction practices.

4. SEAM recommends that the term "Uniform Building Code (UBC)" be replaced with "Statewide Building Code" or similar language to avoid confusion with the outdated model Uniform Building Code.
5. SEAM recommends that SEAM, as the state Structural Engineers Association, be the entity to nominate the Structural Engineer for service on the Technical Building Codes Board.

SEAM seeks to be actively involved in the creation of the legislation as an organized group of professionals in our field. We have established a Code Advisory Committee, we have a standing Special Inspections Task Force and we are available to consult on structural issues relating to building codes. We also have individual members who have expressed interest in being on a committee which will draft the code legislation and the Technical Building Codes Board referenced in the Draft Recommendation Proposal. Our contact information is available at our website: www.seam.org/officers.html

SEAM sincerely appreciates the opportunity to submit comment on this Draft. Thank You.