

Inside ICC

ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES)



Worker measures the distance between reinforcement bars at a construction site.

Understanding Section 1703 of the *International Building Code*®

Informing ICC Members on agency approvals

ICC Members face multiple approval decisions daily. Section 1703 of the *International Building Code* (IBC) clarifies who has the authority to designate an approved agency. A product evaluation entity may mistakenly consider itself as an “approved agency” under Section 1703 — even though the agency has not been designated as an approved agency by the local building official, as the IBC requires. According to the IBC, the approval is based on information provided to building officials by the agency. The building official then determines if the agency meets the applicable requirements of Section 1703.





ANSI accreditation alone is not the determining factor for compliance with this section. According to Section 1703, approved agencies are independent, well-equipped and thoroughly staffed. To be approved by a building official, such agencies, among other things, must demonstrate their objectivity by disclosing

potential conflicts of interest. They must have educated personnel experienced in conducting and supervising product evaluations.

ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES), a subsidiary of the International Code Council (ICC), is the nation's leader in evaluating building products for compliance with the code and was created by code officials for their benefit. With decades of experience in product evaluation, an in-house technical staff of nearly 30 licensed engineers and architects with expertise in the *International Codes* and ANSI accreditation, ICC-ES issues evaluations that are the most widely accepted by jurisdictions in the United States.

Building officials who are ICC Members should assess experience and knowledge of building products and the *International Codes* when considering whether to approve a certification agency. Certification bodies that do not have staff members familiar with the IBC, or financial independence, cannot claim compliance with Section 1703 of the IBC. To further explain the matter, the 2012 IBC Codes and Commentary, in Section 1703.1.3, states, "... if 10 engineering graduates form an agency, the building official should question whether or not this newly formed agency is sufficiently experienced. ..."

"Code officials have the tools to avoid reports issued by subpar agencies," said Jay Elbettar, P.E., C.B.O., LEED

AP, CASp, Building Official, City of Mission Viejo, California, and ICC Board Member. "All they have to do is use Section 1703 of the IBC and the IBC Code and Commentary. That way, they can sleep well at night knowing they have done their due diligence in approving products for installation."

ICC-ES [Evaluation Reports](#) are subject to a stringent quality assurance program, which building officials across the country respect. **bsj**

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