

ADA Marks 20th Anniversary in a Journey that Began with Accessibility Standards, Codes

July 26th marked the 20th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which has improved access in the built environment. Long before the ADA was enacted, the International Code Council and its founding members were working to address disability needs through changes to building and fire safety codes.

In fact, the Code Council's model codes began to address accessibility as early as 1975, 15 years before the ADA was enacted. In addition to codes, *ICC A117.1 Accessible and Usable Buildings and Facilities* is a nationally recognized standard of technical requirements for making buildings accessible. An update of the standard is expected this year.

First published in 1961, A117.1 is referenced by many federal documents and state accessibility laws. ICC (through its precursor organization the Council of American Building Officials) has been responsible for the document since 1987. To support use of the ICC A117.1 standard, the Council provides commentaries, written and verbal interpretations, and Web-based and classroom accessibility training for design, construction and inspection professionals. The Code Council also offers *Accessibility Plan Review* services. Council staff often present at the National ADA Symposium.

"Federal agencies, state and local governments, codes and standards organizations, the construction industry and disability advocacy groups have worked together to make buildings accessible and safe," said International Code Council CEO Richard P. Weiland. "The Code Council, at the request of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, became responsible for the ICC A117.1 accessibility standard in the late 1980s."

President George H.W. Bush [signed](#) "the world's first comprehensive declaration of equality for people with disabilities" into law on July 26, 1990.

Twenty years later, U.S. [World Standards Day](#) recognizes ADA's anniversary with the theme "Standards for Accessibility." As a member of the U.S. World Standards Day Planning Committee, the International Code Council is looking forward to using the opportunity to advocate the needs and rights of the disabled.

The [International Code Council](#), a membership association dedicated to building safety, fire prevention and energy efficiency, develops the codes used to construct residential and commercial buildings, including homes and schools. Most U.S. cities, counties and states choose the International Codes, building safety codes developed by the International Code Council. The International Codes also serve as the basis for construction of federal properties around the world, and as a reference for many nations outside the United States.

