Afghanistan Seeks National Code System

Through a Technical Assistance Project (TAP) funded by the United States (U.S.) Congress through the United States Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), International Code Council headquarters hosted a delegation of Afghanistan building and fire protection engineers from March 1–11 for the purpose of receiving direct feedback to changes the International Code Council Foundation (ICCF) has recommended for Afghanistan based on the Code Council’s International Codes™. Visiting the Code Council on behalf of the Afghanistan Ministry of Urban Development (MoUD) was Engineer (Eng.) Mohammad Yasin Hellal, Deputy Director for Planning and Coordination for Kabul Provincial Municipality; Eng. Mh. Tajiddin Noor, Deputy Director for the Afghan National Fire Service (ANFS); Eng. Mh. Sharif Dehyar, Director of National Building Codes and Regulations (NBC&R); Eng. Nasima Alizada, NBC&R Building Codes Engineer; Eng. Fawzia Abqari, NBC&R Standards Engineer; and translator Dr. Naim Miskinyar, Ph.D., PE, City of Atlanta Watershed Management District.

The International Code Council Foundation’s expert team of U.S. building and fire safety officials, including Azarang ‘Ozzie’ Mirkhah (Las Vegas Fire and Rescue), Ravi Shah (City of Carrollton, Texas), Donald Vigneau (Northeast Energy Efficiency Partnerships), Eric Woods (Capri Engineering) and Lynn Underwood (City of Norfolk, Virginia) led the delegates through various code development exercises designed to bring forth public health, fire and life safety concerns in code administration that must be structured to the social norms and cultural context that define Afghan society.

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The visit presented the Foundation with unprecedented access to Government of Afghanistan (GOA)
officials responsible for regulation of an important sector of the Afghan economy affecting the
reconstruction effort—the building construction and materials sector. All told, the building construction and
materials sector has the highest labor content of any industry in Afghanistan and, therefore, the highest
multiplier effect on income and employment in the country. Stability and capacity building in this essential
sector can therefore significantly contribute to political stability.

In addition to receiving instruction and expert team recommendations to 10 International Codes and the
ICC/ANSI A117.1 Standard, the delegates benefitted greatly from field visits to the City of Alexandria,
Virginia; Washington, D.C., Fire and Emergency Medical Services; Fairfax County Fire and Rescue—Fire
Prevention Division; and Fairfax County Environmental and Facilities and Land Development Services
Departments, where they observed how each jurisdiction receives and processes permits, implements fire
fighter training and prevention programs, conducts front counter and customer service functions,
evaluates site development applications to the comprehensive plan, and utilizes technology to perform
field inspections and address sprinkler system re-testing for existing structures. Many thanks to John D.
Catlett, Master Code Professional and Code Enforcement Director for the City of Alexandria Fire
Department; Battalion Chief Keith Johnson, Fairfax County Fire Prevention Division; Battalion Chief
Kenneth L. Crosswhite, District of Columbia Fire and Emergency Medical Services; and Ray Pylant,
Building Official, Fairfax County Department of Public Works, Environmental and Land Development
Services, who were instrumental in coordinating site visits.

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The mission of the ANFS is to reduce country-wide life and
property losses due to fire and emergencies.

The Afghanistan National Fire Academy can serve up to 60
students for instruction lasting up to six months.
Afghanistan’s Director of the General Department of Fire Prevention and Emergencies, General Aman Khan and Deputy Director Eng. Tajiddin, previously discussed the state of the Republic’s fire prevention infrastructure with the Foundation during a tour of the Afghanistan National Fire Academy and central Fire District Offices in October 2007. There exists only one fire academy, located at the Central Kabul Fire Protection District and serving the entire Republic. It can serve up to 60 students for instruction of up to six months at a time. Of the 34 Afghan provinces, 14 have fire stations. Yet to date, the ANFS has received only second-hand apparatus, equipment and turn-out gear from a few donor countries. The fire houses in Kabul, much less in outlying provinces, do not even have enough ladders or self contained breathing apparatus to enter smoke-filled buildings. And not one rescue-dive team exists in the entire country. According to a study commissioned by the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the country as a whole should have 274 fire protection and emergency response vehicles. They currently have 34, and of those, several are dated 30 years to the Soviet occupation of the country.

Later this summer, the Code Council Foundation, with assistance from its international development partner the Pragma Corporation, will be training key personnel at the MoUD NBC&R, Kabul Provincial Municipality and the Afghan National Fire Service on code enforcement operations and compliance mechanisms recommended for country-wide implementation.

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