

## **ICC-ES Behind the Scenes**

### **Expertise and Collaboration Create Foundation for the Evaluation of New Technologies**

Every day, the world looks to the construction industry to find ways to build stronger, safer and more sustainably. In response, innovative building products, components, methods and materials are constantly being introduced, requiring building and fire safety professionals to evaluate their application and performance.

Fortunately, they are not without support. For more than four decades, ICC Evaluation Service, Inc. (ICC-ES) and its legacy organizations have provided a critical link between code officials and industry, ensuring that new technologies meet the highest quality and safety standards. Today, ICC-ES is the leading U.S. developer of acceptance criteria and evaluation reports for cutting-edge building solutions, providing a firm foundation for uniform code enforcement.

Much of the success of this “behind-the-scenes” effort depends upon the strong relationships that ICC-ES has developed with industry and the public to ensure the exceptional levels of quality and service that code officials demand.

### **Involving Industry**

Like any quality process for the development of technical requirements, ICC-ES evaluation reports incorporate diversified input from regulators, manufacturers and industry.

Ted DeVit, President of DeVit Consulting—a firm that specializes in developing programs to quantify the performance of products and processes not referenced in existing code or acceptance criteria documents—believes that his organization’s relationship with ICC-ES is indispensable.

“We spend a tremendous amount of time working with engineers and manufacturers to introduce new products and processes to industry. The ICC-ES staff has seen every manner of new idea, and has a tremendous amount of exposure to the positive and

negative sides of this development. We regularly consult with them while in the criteria development process, thus avoiding wasted time and dollars while helping us deliver quality products and processes that building officials have trust in.”

These types of collaborative relationships also help code officials stay current on industry developments. For example, although the 2007 editions of the International Codes refer to the 17th edition of the Gypsum Association’s Fire Resistance Design Manual, ICC-ES has reissued the applicable evaluation report ([ESR-1338](#)) referencing the 18th edition, allowing the newer document to be used without concerns about code compliance.

“The value of the ICC-ES evaluation report is the simplicity of being able to transfer information from the manufacturer directly to the code officials,” says Gypsum Association Executive Director Mike Gardner. “Our members recognize this. Our representatives have strong working relationships with ICC Evaluation Service. The two go hand-in-hand. It’s where we want to be for the generic representation for material in industry, and our manufacturer members value it for the commodity and noncommodity products that they manufacture.”

### Encouraging Innovation

A key benefit of this dynamic, interactive process is the creation of a level playing field for all industry members—whether they are seeking to update existing criteria or introduce new technologies. This is especially important because one of the most challenging tasks facing anyone in the building industry is gaining acceptance of products or methods not explicitly prescribed in the model codes.

In developing acceptance criteria, ICC-ES routinely seeks input from experts in the building industry through open public hearings conducted by an independent committee—the ICC-ES Evaluation Committee—composed of representatives of



Industry members address the Evaluation Committee.

governmental jurisdictions that actually enforce building regulations. This forum has not only fostered valuable working relationships with existing industry associations but contributed to the establishment of several new ones, including the Tile Roofing Institute and the Steel Framing Alliance.

“For more than a decade, we’ve had a good working relationship with ICC-ES and its legacy organizations,” relates Concrete Anchor Manufacturers Association Executive Director Jim Borchers. “The relationship is a two-way street. Sometimes we offer suggested criteria revisions and sometimes ICC-ES alerts us to criteria being reviewed so we can provide them with the benefit of our industry experience.”

Ultimately, the ICC-ES Evaluation Committee approves acceptance criteria only after it is satisfied that they adequately address the needs of the building officials who will be using them. The end result is transparency, consistency and independence.

### **The Preferred Choice**

Like its acceptance criteria, the comprehensive, collaborative effort that goes into the development of ICC-ES evaluation reports is not intended solely to serve the interests of industry. That is why complete collections of both documents are posted on the ICC-ES website, providing a rich resource for code officials in jurisdictions large and small.

“ES reports have been a part of my tool chest throughout my career,” says City of Yakima, Washington, Code Administration and Planning Manager Doug Maples—one of the thousands of building and fire safety officials who benefit from the comprehensive procedures put in place by ICC-ES. “Most jurisdictions do not have a testing lab available to them and many developers do not have the resources to develop appropriate test processes for new products. ICC-ES reports can often be used to determine testing processes and installation procedures, providing safety and assurance for both jurisdictions and developers. It is the high standard of the ICC-ES review process and testing procedures that allows our building department to make a quick review of suggested products and know that, if used per the ES report, the minimum requirements of the code are met.”

All told, there are currently more than 1,500 evaluation reports covering new and innovative building products, components, methods and materials—ranging in application from foundation to roof, residential to commercial—with approximately 150 applications for new reports each year. Along with the fact that ICC-ES provides full technical support for its evaluation reports, it comes as no surprise that according to a recent study 80 percent of building officials prefer and use ICC-ES evaluation reports versus other resources.

“We take pride in the efforts that go on behind the scenes, particularly with evaluation committee meetings and the overall acceptance criteria development process, in recognizing alternative products with speed and quality,” says ICC-ES Senior Regional Manager Michael Beaton, P.E. “Together, we can ensure the safety and quality of the built environment.”