



ICC-LABC ADMINISTRATION COMMITTEE

Position Paper on the Minimum Qualification
For Structural Plan Examiner



California is in an area that experiences frequent and significant seismic activity (earthquake country). Earthquakes can cause massive damage to structures, threaten life safety of the building occupants, and disrupt businesses. A 2000 FEMA report estimates the loss to be in the range of \$3.3 Billion annually for the State of California alone (FEMA Release Number: HQ-00-121, September 20, 2000). Proper design, plan review and inspection can and will reduce the amount of damages and losses expected. The administration committee is concerned that the current Plans Examiner certification program administered by the International Code Council does not adequately meets the needs in the following aspects.

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1. Building and Safety departments around the state generally allocate approximately 50% of their resources to perform structural and seismic resistance system plan review and inspection.
2. Recognizing this need, the State passed AB 717 in 1996 requiring individuals performing plans examination and building inspections to be certified. It is recognized that the International Code Council (ICC), formerly ICBO, is currently the only entity that administer certification program in this particular area of need.
3. The State Code is now based on the International Building Code that does not include structural/seismic design standards in the body of the code. These standards are considered "reference standards" and cannot be included in the certification tests. Furthermore, seismic provisions are considered "regional" issues and the ICC test problems must be applicable for all regions.
4. The licensing or registration of professional engineers is regulated by state government agencies in all states of the US by legislation to protect the safety and welfare of the public. The ICC (or ICBO in the past) Plans Examiner certification program is intended to qualify an individual's knowledge of fire life-safety, occupancy, exiting and all other prescriptive non-engineering code requirements to check non-engineering aspect of the building design. See link to ICC certification bulletin page 19, or http://www.iccsafe.org/certification/2007/pdf/2007Bulletin_CodeProfessionals.pdf
5. The "engineering" questions in the ICC certification examinations mainly test the prescriptive code provisions of the engineering sections and minimum material properties tabulated or listed in the code in which no "engineering" or "engineering judgment" is required. The categories or content areas of the examination are as follows:

a. General Administration	9 %
b. Building Planning	21 %
c. Footings and foundations	8 %
d. Floor construction	4 %
e. Wall construction and covering	12 %
f. Roof/Ceiling Construction	4 %



- g. Public Safety and Special Construction 42 %
- h. Total 100%

6. ALL structures in the state of California are required to have seismic design, except those dwellings and minor structures up to 2 stories in height may be constructed using the conventional provisions that do not require engineering. Therefore, relying on any individual who only has a Plans Examiner certificate without license or registration by the State Board as Professional Engineer or Licensed Architect could potentially jeopardizing public safety. Further a Registered Professional Engineer or Licensed Architect must abide by the code of ethics to only practice in the area they are competent, otherwise they could face disciplinary action by the State Boards. Individuals without such state license or registration do not have similar liabilities and ICC does not have disciplinary procedures in place nor do they have legal authority to impose such action.

Recommendations:

The Committee recommends that the Chapter pursue on behalf of the membership the following:

- a. Support new legislation to enhance AB 717 by requiring that the structural/seismic plan review of buildings and structures requiring engineering design is performed by state licensed and qualified individuals.
- b. Encourage all Building and Safety departments to put measures in place within their jurisdiction to ensure that the structural/seismic plan review is performed by state licensed and qualified individuals.

Approved by the ICC Los Angeles Basin Chapter Administration Committee on December 15, 2008. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Administration Committee members:

Chon Cervantes (City of Monrovia), Diaa Guirguis (City of Manhattan Beach), Linda Haines (City of Downey), Y. Henry Huang (City of Tustin – Chair), Truong Huynh (City of Long Beach), Gene Logan (City of Baldwin Park), Ray Schuller (Interwest), Hadi Tabatabaee (City of Fullerton) Tony Weimholt (City of Norwalk), Steve Widmayer (Willdan), , Jes (JAS)

cc: ICC-LABC Board

Disclaimer: This statement represents the consensus opinion of the members of the ICC Los Angeles Basin Chapter Committee on Administration, not necessarily the position of the Chapter, individual member, or the member agencies.

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