

Success, History, Record Setting and a Surprise
Report from the Utah Chapter Code Change Committee
Don Davies, Chairman

Minneapolis Code Hearings – September 17-23, 2008

Success

- G163** – Required Separation of Occupancies (Hours) Table 508.4 – Don Davies clarified the requirement that there must be a required separation from areas used only for private or pleasure vehicles to eliminate confusion between Sections 508.3.2 and 406.2.7.
- RB4** - King of Accessory Buildings (Steve Hamblin) – Challenge to the 200 sq. ft. exemption from Arizona. 2009 I.R.C. will contain the Utah amendment.
- RB9** - Salt Lake City (Tim Burke) - REVIEWED FOR CODE COMPLIANCE stamp on the drawings.
- RB57** – Working with ASSIST Inc. from Salt Lake City and the Independent Living in Minneapolis, Minnesota (Bob Zimmerman), the Utah Chapter was successful in disapproving the change that would have changed the slope on ramps from 1:12 to 1:8. The Utah Chapter Board of Directors donated \$500.00 to ASSIST Inc. that was used at the Minneapolis Convention Center to demonstrate that 1:8 ramps are not useable and not safe. Check out the Video at www.wheelchairramp.org and click on the VIDEOS button and watch the 5 minute 20 second video “Design Considerations”. There were 20 challenges and over 450 written comments on this code change!
- RB71** – After four (4) years of failure, carbon monoxide detectors will be required in the 2009 I.R.C. NEVER GIVE UP!
- FS42** - This code change from Larry Suggars did not get approved but if you are confused about shafts, look at the clarification that Larry submitted on exception #15.

For a complete text of all the code changes and the final actions, go to the ICC web site at www.iccsafe.org and “click on” Codes and Standards and then “click on” Code Development.

History

FIRE SPRINKLING OF DWELLINGS

There were differences of opinion among the members of the code change committee on the issue of fire sprinkling of single family dwellings and townhouses so we took a neutral position on that issue. This was a hotly debated item for over two hours on Sunday morning. Fire fighters packed the room for the vote on RB64 and RB66 and after the vote there was a mass exodus. Some of the arguments against the change were that we could be force feeding the public something they would not accept on the local level. We were warned to be careful about the law of unintended consequences that jurisdictions will reject the code altogether. In the rural areas this would require water storage since wells go dead after 10 to 15 years. It was compared to belts over suspenders. One commenter even challenged the regulators to put the fire sprinklers in their own houses before requiring other to do so. The cost of affordable housing in Michigan was discussed in length. Habitat for Humanity of Michigan noted the numbers of dwelling which

will not be built to cover the cost of sprinklers, and that they have become the poster child against sprinkling. The cost of sprinkling was noted at \$3.50 a foot which was based on a 3,400 square foot house which is hardly affordable housing. To counter the argument of cost was the Habitat for Humanity of South Carolina group who placed sprinklers in dwellings at \$.50 cents a foot and in one of the recently completed sprinklered homes two lives were saved because of the sprinklers. Each year there are over 3,000 deaths from fires in single dwellings which also includes several fire fighters. Even though many fire fighters will lose their jobs due to a reduction in house fires they still supported this change. The cost of a fire sprinkling system in a dwelling was compared to the cost of a granite counter top or lawn sprinklers. The cost of insurance will decrease from 8 to 13% even in spite of some water damage claims. The reliability of smoke detectors was discussed. Often children are not awakened by detectors and when they are they will hide under the bed or in the closet requiring a fire fighter to enter a dangerous situation. This leads to fire fighter protection measures as covered in RB68. Newer houses with TJI joist and trusses are extremely dangerous to fire fighters. It was pointed out that the gusset plates to trusses will fail long before the 2X4 trusses will fail and the 3/8" web in the TJI will also fail much earlier than a solid sawn two-by. This would require all trusses and floor joist or trusses and I-beams to be protected from the underside by a 30 minute fire barrier. The fire sprinkler exception was in place which would encourage sprinkling of existing dwelling undergoing remodeling. Basically an unfinished basement would have to have a gyp board ceiling which would have to be removed when the basement was finished to run electrical and plumbing and walls. This was rejected since it was felt that it was redundant since the fire sprinklers were already voted on and approved a few minutes prior to that item. A very significant statement was made in RB64 hearings to "win the public over." On one side less people will die in fires but more will be priced out of dwellings due to increased cost. Over time the cost of fire sprinkling will decrease as the demand increases and more incentives will be made available.

The 2009 International Residential Code will require sprinklers in new one- and two – family residences as of Jan. 1, 2010, a change approved by more than 73% of the voting members. Another code change will require sprinklers in townhouses to take effect when a jurisdiction adopts the 2009 IRC.

Record Setting

The code hearing on Sunday, September 21st, started at 7:00 AM and lasted until Monday morning (9/22) at 1:30 AM. The members of the Utah Chapter Code Change Committee endured 89 hours of code hearings in 6½ days. Even though Jim McClintic tried to capture photos of certain members sleeping, we convinced him that we were meditating and praying.