

Practice

Codes Consultant Rolf Jensen Offers Free IBC, Model Codes Comparison Web Site *Exclusive AIA-member service available through the Institute's myAIA portal*

Most architects would likely agree that development of the International Building Code® (IBC), the single model building code for the U.S., is a giant step forward in the realm of regulations. Yet we'd wager that relatively few relish the idea of getting used to a new code, especially if they had worked extensively with codes based on one of the other model codes for a long time. As you approach the IBC, wouldn't it be handy to have at your fingertips a tool that allowed you to compare—chapter and verse, side-by-side—your faithful old code with the new IBC? And wouldn't it be even better if you could do this at no cost?

You can. And you can thank Rolf Jensen & Associates Inc. (RJA), the renowned Chicago-based fire protection, security, and code-consultant company, for making this tool available—right now—via the AIA portal exclusively to AIA members. You can access this tool, named "E-Codes Guide: A Partnership Providing Architects with Interpretative Code Analysis," from the portal with one click of the mouse that transports the user to the database on Rolf Jensen's Web site.

The E-codes Guide is a searchable database created by the consultant firm to help users understand the IBC. It offers expert analysis and side-by-side comparisons to the current editions of the National Building Code (NBC), the Standard Building Code®, the Uniform Building Code® and the NFPA101® Life Safety Code.

What does it do?

It works like this: Say you are familiar with the BOCA National Building Code, and want to know how its egress requirements stack up to those of the new IBC Code. You want to know if the "egress from a non-public space" requirements are the same in the BOCA code and the IBC. You look up the section number of the BOCA Code: it's 1011.3 and "allows a minimum of 24 inches for equipment access. Otherwise, minimum width is based on occupant load served." You go to the "Compare Existing Codes" part of the E-Codes site, and, if you type in that you're using the BOCA Code and ask for that particular section, it will fetch it and offer you a side-by-side comparison of the corresponding IBC Section (which is 1004.3.2.2). You will find that the IBC requirement is more restrictive. "Non-Public Areas: Requires 36-inch minimum aisle width, except 28 inches allowed when serving less than 50 people and the area is not required to be accessible." If the wording in the two passages is identical, the entry will give you the language for one code and say "same" for the other; if it is almost identical (same meaning, slightly different wording) it will say "similar."

If you are so inclined, you can add the pertinent sections from the Uniform Building Code and the Southern Building Code, all appearing side-by-side for easy comparison. You also are able to

scroll up and down the text presented and read the side-by-side comparisons for the entire egress sections of the codes, allowing you to see each requirement in context.

Entire IBC text online

E-Codes Guide also allows you to start with any section of the IBC and get to the appropriate section in the old model code of your choice. For instance, say you want to consider a fabric wall finish. You go to the "Review Provisions of the IBC" part of the site, click on "Chapter 8: Interior Finishes," and scroll down to the appropriate interpretation, which tells you, "803.5 Textiles—Test protocols are presented for the use of textile materials used as wall coverings. While they are similar to the procedures followed by the other codes, there are sufficient differences that a designer is cautioned that a material may have been permitted under one of the UBC, NBC, SBC, or NFPA documents, but may not meet the IBC requirements." So warned, you can click on any (or all) of the model codes to get a comparison of requirements.

Getting to the tool

To use the tool,

1. Go to www.aia.org
2. Click on "My AIA: building on your skills" on the top, right-hand side of the screen, to get to the members-only AIA Portal
3. Login into the portal using your 8-digit AIA member number (if you don't know your AIA member number, check your membership renewal notice or call AIA Information Central, 800-242-3837)
4. Click on the "Personalize" button on the right-hand top of the screen
5. Click on "Choose Tools," then "Member Tools"
6. Click on the "E-Codes Guide" logo to get the gadget that will take you to the E-Codes Guide. Click "Finished" on the bottom of the page to take you back to your MyAIA Portal page.
7. Voila! Click on the E-codes Guide in the left-hand column. The guide itself is extremely intuitive and easy to use.

Printed format also available

E-codes Guide is available to AIA members but not to the general public. The information, however, is available to all in printed format. Titled *From Model Codes to the IBC: A Transitional Guide*, this popular book is available from Protection Knowledge Concepts by calling 888-831-4RJA or by visiting the RJA Web site [<http://www.rjagroup.com>]. The cost of the book is \$114.95 (with a 10 percent discount for online orders).