

**WESTERN STATES SEISMIC POLICY COUNCIL  
POLICY RECOMMENDATION 07-4**

**Seismic Provisions in the International Building Code**

**Policy Recommendation 07-4**

WSSPC endorses the prompt adoption and enforcement by states, territories, provinces and/or local jurisdictions of the seismic provisions of the *International Existing Building Code*, the *International Building Code*, and the *International Residential Code*. Further, WSSPC discourages modifications or amendments that would weaken the Code or its required inspections. WSSPC also encourages Code organizations to continue the development and refinement of building codes to include National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) provisions with a specific focus on purpose, education, incentives, lifelines and the business/industry and homeowner sectors.

**Background**

Policy Session Number 5 (Earthquake Building Codes in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century) of the National Earthquake Risk Management Conference in Seattle, Washington (September 2000) generated considerable discussion and resulted in a number of recorded points from the audience. A process to compile the comments into grouping and distilling actions resulted in a potential arena for a WSSPC Policy Statement relative to “codes”. A consensus at the Conference from the presenters and the structured audience participation concluded that adoption by local jurisdictions of the 2000 *International Building Code* and the *International Residential Code* should be the first order of business. Some states, and many jurisdictions, have not adopted the *International Building Code*, potentially leaving their citizens at continued risk. States should be encouraged to remove obstacles which hinder adoptions, and to motivate local jurisdictions to diligently update existing codes. It is recognized that some jurisdictions which have adopted the International Codes have drastically modified or omitted the seismic provisions in the Codes. This action not only jeopardizes their structures by not providing for earthquake resistant structures, but provides a false sense of security to their communities. Once adopted, the Codes must be uniformly and consistently enforced if they are to be effective. This will necessitate the training of building inspectors to some required standards for certification. Partnerships with the homeowners, residents, builders, insurers, owners,

elected officials, scientific groups, etc., with focused concerns on lifelines and public safety will be required to overcome the inertia of commitment to meet the desired outcomes.

### **Facilitation and Communication**

Incentive measures will need to be developed that involve federal, state, territorial, provincial and local funding to “encourage” adoption of building codes that recognize local natural hazards caused by earthquakes. Education of the public on the need and purpose for codes must work towards a mindset to mitigate damage from earthquakes before they happen. Local building code inspectors will require training and certification in the new codes.

### **Assessment**

A measure of the acceptance of this policy recommendation is the number of states, provinces, territories and local jurisdictions that have adopted seismic provisions that meet or exceed the seismic provisions in the *International Building Code*, *International Residential Code* and *International Existing Building Code*.

### **History**

Policy Recommendation 07-4 was first adopted as Policy Recommendation 01-4. PR 01-4 was revised and redesigned as PR 04-4 and re-adopted by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting September 30, 2004. The Policy Recommendation statement was revised and PR 04-4 was readopted as PR 07-4 by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting October 3, 2007.