

**WESTERN STATES SEISMIC POLICY COUNCIL
POLICY RECOMMENDATION 16-4**

Seismic Provisions in the 2015 International Building Codes

Policy Recommendation 16-4

WSSPC endorses the prompt adoption and enforcement of the seismic provisions of the 2015 *International Existing Building Code*, the 2015 *International Building Code*, and the 2015 *International Residential Code* (and the 2015 National Building Code of Canada, where applicable) as minimum standards by states, territories, provinces and/or local jurisdictions. 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 and consensus standards to remain substantially equivalent to the National Earthquake Hazards Reduction Program (NEHRP) Recommended Seismic Provisions for New Buildings and Other Structures (FEMA 1050) and encourage authorities having jurisdictions to focus on seismic education, purpose, incentives, lifelines and the business/industry and residential sectors.

Executive Summary

The *International Existing Building Code*, the *International Building Code* and the *International Residential Code* identify the minimum standards for the protection of life, limb and property. These consensus documents, which are supported by every major construction organization in the United States, provide the means for local jurisdictions, states and territories to protect their citizens, safeguard the economic vitality of their communities and provide for a sustainable environment. Amending seismic provisions out of the Code that are essential to the structural integrity of buildings compromises the effectiveness of the document and the safety of the community. Coinciding with Code adoptions is the need for appropriate training so the seismic resistant provisions may be consistently enforced and maintained. It is only through the adoption of the unamended code or applying more stringent provisions to the International Code that a community has a legitimate expectation to be resilient in the event of disaster for its citizens, businesses and homes.

Background

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 that hinder adoption, and to motivate local jurisdictions to diligently update existing codes. It is recognized that some jurisdictions that have adopted the International Codes have drastically modified or omitted the seismic provisions of 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, and others with focused concerns on lifelines and public safety will be required to overcome any lack of commitment to meet the desired outcomes.