

The ICC-ES Acceptance Criteria Process

ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) Acceptance Criteria (ACs) are technical documents created to provide a means for ICC-ES to determine the code compliance of innovative construction methods and materials when other standards are nonexistent or vague. ACs are also intended to clarify the technical data required to prove, for ICC-ES purposes, the code compliance of more conventional products and systems. ACs are intended solely for use by ICC-ES in evaluating products and producing evaluation reports, and are not for use by people or organizations outside the ICC-ES system.

The process for producing ACs is a transparent one, involving input from interested parties and final approval by an independent committee (the ICC-ES Evaluation Committee) consisting of building-code professionals. Input on an AC may come from manufacturers, technical experts, academics, testing laboratories, product end users and, of course, the ICC-ES technical staff. Normally, the staff prepares an initial draft of an AC, with manufacturer input, and the draft is posted on the ICC-ES web site at least 30 days prior to the Evaluation Committee meeting when the proposed AC will be considered. (The Evaluation Committee meets three times a year.) Comments are received from interested parties, and the staff responds to these comments in memos that are also posted on the ICC-ES web site. The web site is the place where people and organizations can air their concerns even before the actual committee hearing on an AC.

At committee meetings, time is set aside for the public to make statements about each AC on the agenda. After the statements, the nine-member committee votes to approve proposed ACs without change, to approve with changes, to withdraw consideration of the proposal or to hold the proposal for further study. If an AC is put under further study, the ICC-ES is expected to bring it back to the committee, with revisions, at some future date. Evaluation committee meetings are recorded, and the recordings are made available to the public, on CDs, for a set period following each committee meeting. Committee actions on each AC are noted on the ICC-ES web site, and newly approved criteria are posted on the web site shortly after each committee meeting.

In addition to the committee process, there is an alternative AC process that may be followed when one or more of the following applies:

1. The subject of the criteria is nonstructural, does not involve life safety, and is already addressed in national recognized standards or generally accepted industry standards.
2. The subject is a minor and/or noncontroversial revision to an existing criteria.

3. A new criteria is needed, but other ACs, or elements of the code, provide precedent.
4. The criteria in question is a preliminary draft, and staff is simply seeking input from the committee, industry, and other interested parties.

Under the alternative process, criteria that are ready for committee consideration will be balloted to the committee at the same time they are posted on the ICC-ES web site for public review. If, after a 30-day posting period, no serious concerns have been expressed by either the public or the committee, and the committee has voted for approval, the AC is published and goes into use by ICC-ES. On the other hand, if serious issues arise during the posting period, ICC-ES staff may decide on one of the following options:

1. Make revisions to the AC and post it again under the alternative process.
2. Since the criteria is now controversial, take it to a future public hearing of the Evaluation Committee.
3. Revise the criteria and post it to the web site for public input, as described in Item 4, above.

Under both the open-hearing process and the alternative process, transparency is maintained, and all interested parties are allowed to contribute to the development of ICC-ES Acceptance Criteria. This is one of the great strengths of the ICC-ES Evaluation Program.