

Understanding Section 1703 of the International Building Code®



A product evaluation entity may mistakenly consider itself as an “approved agency” under section 1703 of the *International Building Code*® (IBC) - even though the agency has not been designated as an approved agency by the local building official, as the IBC requires. According to the IBC, the approval is based upon information

provided to building officials by the agency. The building official then determines if the agency meets the applicable requirements of Section 1703.

ANSI accreditation alone is not the determining factor for compliance with this section. According to Section 1703, approved agencies are independent, well-equipped and thoroughly staffed. To be approved by a building official, such agencies, among other things, must demonstrate their objectivity by disclosing potential conflicts of interest. They must have educated personnel experienced in conducting and supervising product evaluations.

ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) is the nation’s leader in evaluating building products for compliance with the code. With decades of experience in product evaluation, an in-house technical staff of nearly 30 licensed engineers and architects with expertise in the International Codes, and ANSI accreditation, ICC-ES issues evaluation reports that are the most widely accepted by jurisdictions in the United States.

When considering whether to approve a certification agency, building officials should assess the agency’s experience and knowledge of building products and the

International Codes. Certification bodies that do not have staff members familiar with the IBC, or financial independence, cannot claim compliance with Section 1703 of the IBC. To further explain the matter, the 2012 IBC Codes and Commentary, in Section 1703.1.3, states, “... if 10 engineering graduates form an agency, the building official should question whether or not this newly formed agency is sufficiently experienced....”

“Code officials have the tools to avoid reports issued by subpar agencies,” says Jay Elbettar, PE, CBO, LEED AP, CASP, Building Official, City of Mission Viejo. “All they have to do is to use Section 1703 of the IBC and the IBC Code and Commentary. That way, they can sleep well at night knowing that they have done their due diligence in approving products for installation.”

ICC-ES evaluation reports are subject to a stringent quality assurance program, which building officials across the country respect.

ICC-ES is a subsidiary of the International Code Council (ICC). The International Code Council is a member-focused association dedicated to helping the building safety community and construction industry provide safe, sustainable and affordable construction through the development of codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process. Most U.S. communities and many global markets choose the International Codes. ICC-ES, with a history that dates back more than 80 years, has comprehensive expertise and understanding of the I-Codes.