

**WESTERN STATES SEISMIC POLICY COUNCIL  
POLICY RECOMMENDATION 19-4**

**Seismic Provisions in the 2018 International Building Codes**

**Policy Recommendation 19-4**

WSSPC endorses the prompt adoption and enforcement of the seismic provisions of the 2018 *International Building Code*, the 2018 *International Residential Code*, and the 2018 *International Existing Building Code* (and the 2018 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 encourages authorities having jurisdictions to focus on seismic education, purpose, incentives, lifelines and the business/industry and residential sectors.

**Executive Summary**

The *International Building Code*, the *International Residential Code*, and the *International Existing Building 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-resistance provisions may be consistently enforced and maintained. It is only through the adoption of the international codes without amendments or by applying more stringent provisions that a community has a legitimate expectation to be resilient in the event of earthquakes 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 established and 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.

## **Internal Section:**

### **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 earthquake hazards. 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 2018 editions of the International Existing Building Code, the International Building Code, and the International Residential Code.

### **History**

- Policy Recommendation 16-4 was updated and re-adopted as Policy Recommendation 19-4 by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting April 26, 2019.
- Policy Recommendation 13-4 was re-adopted as Policy Recommendation 16-4 by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting May 6, 2016.
- Policy Recommendation 10-4 was updated and re-adopted as Policy Recommendation 13-4 by a unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting May 3, 2013.
- Policy Recommendation 07-4 was revised and re-adopted as Policy Recommendation 10-4 by unanimous voice vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting July 9, 2010.
- The Policy Recommendation statement was revised and Policy Recommendation 04-4 was re-adopted as Policy Recommendation 07-4 by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting October 3, 2007.
- Policy Recommendation 01-4 was revised and re-designed as Policy Recommendation 04-4 and re-adopted by unanimous vote of the WSSPC membership at the Annual Business Meeting September 30, 2004.
- Policy Recommendation 19-4 was first adopted as Policy Recommendation 01-4 in 2001.