

Applying the Codes to Cannabis Facilities

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Preface

On November 7, 2000, voters in Colorado approved Amendment 20 legalizing the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes. Then in 2012, the voters approved the recreational sales of cannabis to the public. This was the beginning of a new industry. Many building departments struggled with how to address this new influx of business and processes that had never seen before. The first sales of recreational cannabis in Colorado occurred in January 2014. The race was on. Everyone wanted to get into the business. Cities and counties were inundated with permit requests for grow facilities, extraction facilities, dispensaries and other related uses.

I was originally asked to do a presentation to the Colorado Chapter of the International Code Council (ICC) on cannabis facilities in 2014 when this all started. That was the beginning of my education on the cannabis industry and the processes that are involved in manufacturing the different products. I had to step back and look at the uses as just another industrial process. I also had to look at the code and see how it could be applied to these facilities.

Washington and Oregon were next to join the party. I was asked to present the information I learned in Colorado to others across the country. I had become the “code guy” on cannabis. I never thought that I would be that guy. I felt that cannabis would be legalized at some point, but never thought I would be involved with the industry like I have been. Several years went by and more states started legalizing cannabis, both medically and recreationally. ICC came to me and asked if I would write a book on the subject. I was honored to say yes, and this is it.

This book is a compilation of what we have learned over the last several years working with the facilities, talking to industry people, doing my classes and researching the processes that are used. We are still learning. The manufacturers are coming up with new ideas every day. For example, I spoke with a winemaker recently who said he was looking at ways of infusing wine with cannabis. Who would of thought that would ever happen?

We wanted to put a guide together to help the code official understand how the code is applied to these facilities. You will notice that there are no references to the codes. That is because we wanted to make the guide something that can be used over several different cycles of the code. We all know that the codes are updated every three years. That would require an update to the guide every three years. We didn’t feel that it was necessary to do that. So, the user will need to be somewhat familiar with the codes to use this guide.

The guide takes the reader through the process of how cannabis is grown, cultivated and processed. I think it is important to understand what the process is about before we



can apply the code. It provides a foundation of how to enforce the code on these types of uses. At the end of the book, we have provided a checklist of things to consider when dealing with cannabis facilities. We have tried to address all the potential issues with these facilities. However, it is very possible that we missed something that has not come up yet. However, I think the user of this guide will have the necessary background to evaluate the issue and then apply the codes appropriately.

About the I-Codes®

The International Codes (I-Codes) are used in a variety of ways in both the public and private sectors. Most industry professionals are familiar with the I-Codes as the basis of laws and regulations in communities across the US and in other countries. However, the impact of the codes extends well beyond the regulatory arena, as they are used in a variety of nonregulatory settings, including:

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- ⇒ College, university and professional school textbooks and curricula.
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Mr. Thomas has forty years' experience in working with building codes, including plan reviews, inspections and administration. His firm provides building code consulting services for governmental agencies and architectural firms, as well as educational seminars on building codes. Since starting a building code-consulting firm in 1999, he has served as the contract Building Official for local jurisdictions in Colorado. Mr. Thomas has also served on several ICBO and ICC committees including serving as a member and then Chairman of the ICC Means of Egress Code Development Committee. He is also the author of the book, *Building Code Basics*, based on the 2009 and 2012 IBC, and *Building Code Essentials*, based on the 2015 and 2018 IBC, both available from ICC. He and his firm were awarded the Educator of the Year Award by the ICC in 2018. He has presented building code classes for the last 30 years and provides an interesting and engaging look at building codes.

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The International Code Council is a member-focused association. It is dedicated to developing model codes and standards used in the design, build and compliance process to construct safe, sustainable, affordable and resilient structures. Most US communities and many global markets choose the International Codes. ICC Evaluation Service (ICC-ES) is the industry leader in performing technical evaluations for code compliance fostering safe and sustainable design and construction.

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