# TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Preface** ................................................. v  
Dedication ................................................. viii  
Acknowledgements ........................................ viii  
About the Author .......................................... ix  
About the International Code Council ................. x  

1 **Safe Buildings** ................................. 1  
An Important Job ........................................ 3  
Foundation ................................................. 4  
Support ..................................................... 6  
Principles of Code Administration .................... 8  
Minimum Requirements ................................. 9  
Interpretation .............................................. 10  
Alternatives ............................................... 12  

2 **Approaches to Inspection** ............... 17  
Starting on the Right Foot ............................ 19  
Decision Making ........................................... 22  
Costs ....................................................... 31  
Consistency ............................................... 32  
Finding Solutions ........................................ 35  
Teaching and Learning ................................ 36  
Managing Time .......................................... 43
3 Getting Along ........................................... 53
   Inspector as Facilitator ......................... 55
   Respect ........................................... 56
   Keeping an Open Mind ......................... 56
   Giving Bad News ................................. 58
   Difficult People ................................. 59
   Common Mistakes ............................... 63

4 Customer Service ................................. 69
   First Impressions ............................... 72
   Listening ........................................ 73
   Honesty ......................................... 74
   Expectations .................................... 75
   Choose Your Words Carefully ................. 77
   Obstacles ....................................... 78
   Complaints ..................................... 79

5 Doing the Right Thing ......................... 89
   Professional Integrity ......................... 93
   Code of Conduct ............................... 94
   Public Welfare ................................ 96
   Rights .......................................... 96
   Accuracy ....................................... 98
   Conflict of Interest ............................ 98
   Making Ethical Decisions ..................... 100

6 Communication ................................. 105
   In Person (Face to Face) ....................... 106
   Telephone .................................... 113
   Written ....................................... 116
   E-mail ......................................... 122

7 Conclusion ........................................ 139

Appendix A
   ICC Evaluation Services Report (ESR) .... 145

Appendix B
   Inspector Certification ....................... 149
Inspector Skills addresses the soft skills that are essential for construction inspectors to excel in their mission to ensure safe, code-compliant buildings for the public. Soft skills, in this context, are the nontechnical traits and behaviors that enhance an inspector’s ability to interact with others and to successfully carry out his or her job duties. In addition to people skills—those social graces that improve interaction with people—soft skills include decision making, problem solving, professionalism, integrity, honesty and time management, to name a few.
As new methods and materials become available, and lessons are learned through experience, construction and the codes that regulate it are becoming more complex. It follows that an inspector’s job, while interesting and rewarding, is becoming more challenging. It makes sense then that training and resources for the inspector often have been aimed at “hard” skills—the occupational knowledge, skills and abilities (KSAs) related to technical provisions of the code and methods of construction. There are many texts and resources available to the inspector, including the codes themselves, to gain the technical knowledge necessary for performing the job. But there are no texts available for addressing inspector-specific soft skills. Inspectors have been left in large part to develop their soft skills on their own, by trial and error or based on their previous life experiences. Inspector Skills was developed specifically to fill that void. Its purpose is to raise awareness of the importance of soft skills and to provide guidance toward recognizing and improving those skills. The text also serves to reinforce the positive behaviors of skilled inspectors who possess and practice effective soft skills. A solid understanding of the technical provisions of the code serves as a baseline and is essential to becoming a good inspector. But developing appropriate soft skills can be equally important and can elevate an inspector from good to excellent.

Today’s employers understand that soft skills are important, particularly in jobs that interact with or provide service to the public. Good customer service, communication, organization and self-management skills, for example, can make the difference in the success of any company. So it is with building departments, where these skills are critical in pursuing the goal of safe, healthy and durable buildings for the community. That goal is best accomplished with buy-in from the public—
acceptance that the mission of the department and its inspectors is worthwhile and benefits the community. The inspector interacts with the public in the office and on the job site, and is often the first or only point of contact in representing the building department. In this regard, the inspector is an ambassador for the department in gaining the public trust and support. Inspector Skills is written to provide additional tools for the inspector for eliciting cooperation rather than confrontation. The book encourages team-building with contractors, designers, property owners and others involved in construction of buildings, and supports the premise that the inspector and the customer are not on opposing teams. The inspector is encouraged to develop skills to move interactions from contentiousness to collaboration. Operating with respect and diplomacy not only makes life easier for the inspector, it raises the bar of professionalism and improves the image of the inspector in the eyes of the public. Building public trust and acceptance of construction codes works to promote code adoption and application, thereby improving public safety.

Inspector Skills was written for construction inspectors in all disciplines. It applies to building, fire, electrical, plumbing, mechanical and combination inspectors, and to inspectors in specialized fields. Students of construction technology considering a career in code administration or inspection will also benefit from the material covered in the text. Of course, there is a broader application of the material—developing good soft skills is equally important to all employees of public service agencies including permit technicians, plan reviewers and building officials. Additionally, the content is useful to building officials and fire code officials with a focus on developing policies and procedures, and as a training
tool to promote uniform and fair inspection practices while improving communications and public relations. For purposes of this text, the term “building department” is interchangeable with “fire department” and “code safety department.” Likewise, the term “building official” is equivalent to “code official” and “fire code official.”

The opinions set forth in this text are those of the author and do not necessarily represent the official position of the ICC. In addition, the code official has sole authority for the administration and interpretation of the codes, and for other operations of the building safety department.

Comments concerning this publication are encouraged and may be directed to the ICC at: inspectorskills@iccsafe.org.