# TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface ........................................... vii
   About the Author ................................. viii
   About the International Code Council ........ viii

1 Safe Buildings .............................. 1
   An Important Job ............................... 3
   Understand Your Role ........................... 5
   Foundation ........................................ 7
   Support ........................................... 9
   Principles of Code Administration ............ 10
   Minimum Requirements ......................... 12
   Interpretation ................................... 13
   Alternatives ...................................... 15
   Key Points ....................................... 16

2 Approaches to Plan Review ............... 19
   Scope of Plan Review ............................ 23
   Code Compliance Process ....................... 25
   Level of Review ................................... 27
   Managing Time .................................... 30
   Plan Review Philosophy .......................... 35
   Finding Solutions ................................. 38
   Teaching and Learning ............................ 39
   How to Format Comments ....................... 43
Communicating Comments .................................. 44
Professionalism .............................................. 45
Key Points .................................................... 46

3 Getting Along .............................................. 51
Plan Reviewer as Facilitator ............................... 53
Respect ......................................................... 54
Keeping an Open Mind ..................................... 55
Giving Bad News ............................................ 57
Difficult People .............................................. 58
Common Plan Review Mistakes ......................... 61
Key Points .................................................... 65

4 Department Success ...................................... 67
Submittal Guidelines ....................................... 69
Plan Review Checklists ................................... 73
Deferred Submittals ....................................... 80
Phased Approval .......................................... 84
Counter Plan Review ...................................... 86
Third-Party Plan Review ................................ 90
Interdepartmental Coordination ......................... 90
Key Points .................................................... 93

5 Customer Service ....................................... 95
First Impression ............................................ 98
Listening ....................................................... 99
Honesty ....................................................... 100
Expectations ............................................... 101
Choose your Words Carefully ......................... 103
Obstacles ..................................................... 104
Complaints .................................................. 105
Build Relationships ...................................... 110
Key Points .................................................... 113

6 Doing the Right Thing ................................. 115
Professional Integrity .................................... 118
Code of Conduct ........................................... 119
7 Communication Skills ........................... 131
   The Counter ................................. 134
   In-Person Meetings ......................... 137
   Video Conferencing ......................... 138
   Telephone Calls ............................ 140
   Written .................................... 141
   E-mails .................................... 143
   Key Points .................................. 155
8 Conclusion ................................. 157
Appendix A
   The Review Process ......................... 163
Appendix B
   Electronic Plan Review Considerations .... 185
Appendix C
   ICC Evaluation Service Report (ESR) ...... 189
Plan Review Skills addresses the soft skills that are essential for plan reviewers to excel in their role to ensure safe, code-compliant buildings for the public and the safety and general welfare of building occupants. Soft skills are non-technical traits and behaviors that enhance the plan reviewer’s ability to interact and collaborate with design professionals and building owners with a common goal of timely completion of plan review efficiently and accurately. 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 important as the process is that leads to efficient and consistent reviews, this topic is covered also in Appendix A.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jay Elbettar, PE, CBO, LEED-AP, CSP, BSCE, MSSE

Jay Elbettar is an ICC consultant with over 40 years’ experience in building design and construction and in building code plan review, inspections, and administration. He is a Past President and a lifetime honorary member of the International Code Council. He served on the State of California Hospital Safety Board and was the Vice Chair of the Seismic Safety Commission. He is a licensed professional engineer in the states of California, Florida, Texas, Colorado, Nevada, Tennessee and Georgia and holds a bachelor and master’s degree in civil and structural engineering, is a certified building official, building inspector, plans examiner and a LEED Accredited Professional and holds many other certifications and honors. Mr. Elbettar was the recipient of the 2010 Gerald H. Jones Code Official of the Year Award from the International Code Council and is a California Building Officials Hall of Fame inductee and a lifetime honorary member. Mr. Elbettar is an ICC instructor and an expert code consultant in building codes, accessibility and sustainability. He was an adjunct professor at Coastline Community College and provided training to design professionals, engineers and plan reviewers, nationally and internationally. He also assisted in the development of the Saudi Certification Exams and authored the Saudi Building Code Guide and the English Arabic Constructionary.

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CODE COUNCIL®

The International Code Council is the leading global source of model codes and standards and building safety solutions that include product evaluation, accreditation,
technology, codification, consulting, training and certification. The International Code Council’s codes, standards and solutions are used to ensure safe, affordable and sustainable communities and buildings worldwide.

The International Code Council family of solutions includes the ICC Evaluation Service (ICC ES), S. K. Ghosh Associates, the International Accreditation Service (IAS), General Code, ICC NTA, ICC Community Development Solutions, Alliance for National & Community Resilience (ANCR) and American Legal Publishing.

**Office Locations:**

**Headquarters:**
200 Massachusetts Avenue, NW, Suite 250, Washington, DC 20001
888-ICC-SAFE (888-422-7233)
www.iccsafe.org

**Eastern Regional Office**
900 Montclair Road, Birmingham, AL 35213

**Central Regional Office**
4051 Flossmoor Road, Country Club Hills, IL 60478

**Western Regional Office**
3060 Saturn Street, Suite 100, Brea, CA 92821

**MENA Regional Office**
Dubai Association Centre Office, One Central, Building 2, Office 8, Dubai World Trade Centre Complex, PO Box 9292, Dubai, UAE

**OCEANIA Regional Office**
Level 9, Nishi Building, 2 Phillip Law Street, New Acton, Canberra ACT 2601

**Family of Solutions:**

![Family of Solutions Image]