

## *How the I-Codes Will Change the Fenestration Industry*

By Jon Hill, Keystone Certifications Inc.

*Forty of your fenestration industry colleagues gathered on 12/4/01 at Architectural Testing (ATI) in York, PA for NWDA's Fall Educational Seminar to learn about complying with changing state building codes.*

Much of the discussion focused on the new International Codes (I-Codes), primarily the "International Residential Code for One and Two Family Dwellings" (IRC-2000). The I-Codes are the result of a collaboration of the three major US code organizations (BOCA, ICBO and SBCCI), who formerly each published their own codes.

In an effort to make building codes consistent across the US, each state is mandated to review the new I-Codes for adoption. While each state is not required to adopt the codes, industry experts believe most will, as evidenced by recent adoptions in PA, OH, MD and KY.

*The significance of I-Code adoptions to fenestration manufacturers are the requirements for product thermal (NFRC) and structural (ANSI/AAMA/WDMA) performance testing, certification and labeling to demonstrate compliance in both new construction and replacement installations.*

Fortunately for manufacturers, as states adopt the new codes, there is a time lag until the building officials (inspectors) in each jurisdiction are educated about all facets of the code. However, per Mike Mackereth of ATI, "the local inspector is God, and can require removal of all non-conforming products - it's much easier to conform with the code than to fight with an inspector!"

So how do manufacturers demonstrate to inspectors that their products meet code requirements? – *certification labels*. This label is the end result of the certification process that includes independent lab testing of each product to the referenced standards, and the manufacturer becoming a "licensee" of a recognized certification agency.

As a certification licensee the manufacturer agrees to build the products as they were tested under the control of their own documented and implemented quality management system. A licensee also agrees to allow the certification agency to regularly inspect their plants to confirm this is the case, and if it is the licensee is granted use of the certification labels.

This process prevents "the fox from guarding the hen house" as compliance is verified from an independent source, and places all manufacturers on an even playing field with regard to supplying products that meet performance standards.

Building codes requiring testing, certification and labeling to demonstrate compliance is not a new concept or unique to the fenestration industry. Many other products require certification and labeling, including roofing, siding and plumbing products, HVAC, electrical and communications equipment.

The I-Codes will mean little to fenestration manufacturers who already demonstrate product performance via testing, certification and labeling, the rest of us have some work to do!