The Value of Building Codes

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The purpose of residential building codes is to assure that minimum acceptable standards are used in the design, construction and maintenance of the places where people live. Building codes are intended to increase the safety and integrity of structures, thereby reducing deaths, injuries and property damage from a wide range of hazards. The adoption and enforcement of building codes are especially important for residential buildings because registered design professionals (e.g., engineers and architects) are less likely to be involved in home design than commercial construction.

Damage reduction that results from the adoption and enforcement of residential building codes helps to keep people in their homes following a natural or manmade disaster, reduces the need for public and private disaster aid, and preserves natural resources and the built environment. Furthermore, reducing damage to residences means that the work force required to operate businesses can remain in the area, and their presence helps to maintain local demand for a wide range of products and services.

Residential building codes promote a level, predictable playing field for designers, builders and suppliers. Codes also offer a degree of comfort for buyers who care about the safety and soundness of their homes but lack the technical expertise to evaluate building plans or construction techniques. Building codes also allow for economies of scale in the production of building materials and construction, as well as a level of safety for first responders during and after fires and other disaster events.

The Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety has issued a report that provides an analysis of residential building codes in the 18 hurricane-prone coastal states along the Gulf of Mexico and the Atlantic Coast. The state-by-state assessment of individual state performance in developing and promulgating a residential building code system that uses modern building codes, coupled with strong enforcement related activities to enhance the protection of homes and families. You can view the report here:

Rating the States: An Assessment of Residential Building Codes and Enforcement Systems for Life Safety and Property Protection in Hurricane Prone Regions

(Courtesy disastersafety.org)

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