



## You Can Influence Codes and Standards

MAY 23, 2016 BY [ROOFINGADMIN2](#) [LEAVE A COMMENT](#)

As associate executive director of the Washington, D.C.-based [EPDM Roofing Association \(ERA\)](#), I focus a great deal of my time and energy on the codes and standards that regulate or guide the roofing business. In the current environment, driven by constant upgrades in technology, as well as the need to save energy, these codes—and the standards that often inform them—seem to be undergoing steady revision. Believe it or not—and the word “geek” does come to mind—I find participating in this process extremely interesting. In fact, following and sometimes influencing emerging codes and standards is among the most important responsibilities of my job.

I'll be the first to admit that a detailed review of a standards manual is probably not anyone's idea of exciting reading. But given the importance of codes and standards to the construction industry, we ignore them at our own risk.

For a start, what's the difference between a code and a standard? Ask enough people in the roofing industry and you will get a variety of answers. But generally, codes are the “top-tier” documents, providing a set of rules that specify the minimum acceptable level of safety for manufactured, fabricated or constructed objects. They frequently have been enacted into local laws or ordinances and noncompliance can result in legal action. Standards, on the other hand, establish engineering or technical requirements for products, practices, methods or operations. They literally provide the nuts and bolts of meeting code requirements. If codes tell you what you have to do, standards tell you how to do it. Frequently, standards—especially “voluntary consensus standards”—are the precursors for what becomes law years down the road.

ERA has represented the manufacturers of EPDM roofing for more than a decade. Through the years, we have learned the importance of interfacing with standard-setting and regulatory bodies. One of our first, and most important, learning experiences was working with the Northeast and mid-Atlantic states when they issued regulations designed to achieve federally mandated air-quality standards. (See the [article in Roofing's September/October 2014 issue, page 58.](#)) The initial regulations, which lowered the amount of VOCs in many roofing products, were based on those used in southern California and incorporated provisions that were effective in the climactic and market conditions of that state. But states in the affected areas, from Virginia to Maine, confronted a situation where the new regulations threatened to bring the roofing industry to a sudden halt. In some instances, no adhesives and sealants were available to meet the new standards. And the new products, when they became available, would need to be effective in very cold climates totally unlike those on the West Coast.

ERA worked with officials throughout the impacted areas, helping to create “phase-in” schedules that would give industry enough time to develop products to meet the new standards. In state

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after state, the local regulators welcomed our input. Our point-of-view was based on a deep understanding of the business needs of our industry. Just as important, we understood the science behind the proposed regulations and could work with the regulatory bodies to ensure the air-quality needs and the needs of the roofing industry were met.

This experience has informed our ongoing approach to code-setting and regulatory bodies. Since our work with the states setting VOC standards, we have invested staff time and resources to stay current with and even ahead of proposals that would impact our members and their customers. We have testified before the South Coast Air Quality Management District in California on its proposal to limit VOCs. ERA has organized an ad-hoc coalition to successfully oppose an unnecessarily stringent proposal to require reflective roofs in the Denver area. And our organization is currently providing input to Atlanta-based ASHRAE's efforts to clarify its regulation regarding air leakage. This issue—of great importance to the roofing industry—relates to other work being done in ASHRAE working groups and subcommittees on thermal bridging, as well as the definition of walls and wall assemblies. ASHRAE has convened an "Air Leakage Work Group" whose charge is to review the pertinent sections of Standard 90.1 and make recommendations for revising it. ERA staff will be present at this group's meetings and will once again provide input based on the expertise of our members.

When I work with code-setting and regulatory groups, I am reminded of that very familiar saying, "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game." Based on our work at ERA, I'd like to revise that. Your skill at "playing the game" will definitely influence whether you win or lose. Our experience tells us that staying involved with regulatory groups and providing them with input based on firm science and field experience leads to a winning outcome for the roofing business.

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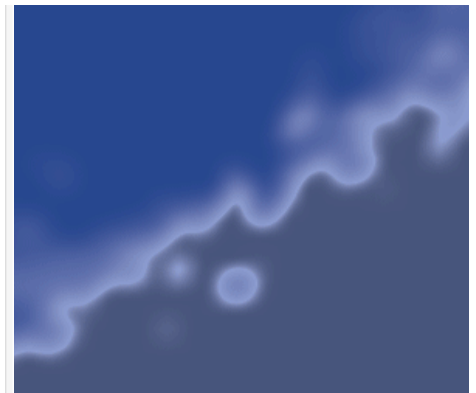
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