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Comments on District of Columbia's adoption of a Green Building Code

Sustainability has been a hot topic in building codes for many years now but the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO) has been producing codes which include mandatory water efficient plumbing fixtures since the 1990's and has produced a solar energy code since 1976. IAPMO is not new to this issue and works both domestically and internationally with governments to produce codes that provide the construction industry with guidelines and code language that help save one of the earth's most precious resource, water. IAPMO as a membership organization of over 80 years with experience in focused code development and model codes for the plumbing and mechanical industry places IAPMO in the best possible position to create a document that will equip the construction industry with the tools to build a better, more sustainable coexistence with the planet.

The Green Plumbing and Mechanical Code Supplement is just such a document. The Green Supplement is a separate document from the Uniform Plumbing and Mechanical Codes and establishes requirements for green building and water efficiency applicable to plumbing, mechanical, and solar energy (both hydronic and photovoltaic) systems. The Green Supplement serves as an adjunct to the Uniform Codes or ANY of the plumbing and mechanical model codes used in the US.

The supplement is not a "greener" version of the Uniform Codes, but rather, the Green Supplement:

- Serves as a repository for provisions that ultimately will be integrated into the Uniform Codes. The Green Supplement is a logical transitional home for green requirements until they are fully accepted by industry and are ready to be included into the code.
- Serves as a resource for progressive jurisdictions that are implementing green building and water efficiency programs.
- Is an enforcement aid for existing green ordinances
- Is a model for jurisdictions implementing green ordinances
- Serves as a resource for inspectors, plumbers, contractors, engineers and manufacturers in designing, installing and approving green plumbing and mechanical systems.
- Is written in voluntary language and in a format similar to the Uniform Codes.
- Maintains IAPMO philosophy of a focused industries specific document to minimize the need for additional codes and standards.
- Coordinates and resolves conflicts among other green building and water efficiency program requirements.



Where applicable, the Green supplement establishes:

- Minimum sustainability provisions – “Raising the bar” as with all Uniform Codes
- Health and safety provisions to ensure green practices are safe and reliable
- Minimum performance, design, installation and maintenance requirements

The benefits of utilizing the Green Supplement are many. The Green Supplement provides the most comprehensive collection of plumbing and mechanical provisions available toward increased water and energy efficiency. All provisions contained in the Green Supplement are **proven** safe and reliable. Installation and maintenance requirements are contained within the document. In addition, the Green Supplement provides commentary detailing the water and energy savings associated with the provisions detailed within its language.

Only one publication spells out the best sustainable plumbing and mechanical building practices in simple straightforward code language; the Green Plumbing and Mechanical Code Supplement.

Review of the Green Supplement by the Construction Codes Coordination Board (CCCB) would benefit the District by allowing not only commercial construction industry into inclusion in the water efficiency language of the Green Supplement but also provide language to residential construction and retrofit. The Green Supplement language on rain catchment is one example that allows residents to set up systems to use rain water. It could also provide assistance in areas such as the Bloomingdale neighborhood to alleviate storm runoff by diverting some rain runoff from the sewer system.

IAPMO stands ready to assist the District of Columbia’s effort in saving resources for future generations and water can be no more precious than any other resource.

