

Center Partner IBTS Providing Critical Technical Assistance to Louisiana Parishes

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In August and September of 2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita caused severe damage to life and property in Louisiana. On November 29, 2005 Governor Kathleen Blanco signed Act 12 of the 2005 first extraordinary session requiring state-wide enforcement of the State Uniform Construction Code. The municipalities and parishes may establish agreements with other governmental entities of the state or certified third-party providers to issue permits and enforce the State Uniform construction Code in order to provide services required by the Act.

had approximately 65 individuals certified in any aspect of the Code. There were actually less than a dozen Certified Building Officials (CBOs) who were qualified by training, testing and experience to conduct plan reviews, inspections, or otherwise manage a building code department. Nowhere near enough to meet the standards of the law and get needed construction moving.

As a result, even the parishes and municipalities that did have building code departments were overwhelmed by the plan review and inspection requirements because of a chronic shortage of certified professionals.

The Institute for Building Technology and Safety (IBTS) stepped in



IBTS CEO Ashok Goswami (r) and team inspecting a home in St. Tammany Parish.

augmenting staffing with over 70 additional professionals having multi-disciplined certifications.

IBTS's expertise is playing a key role in aiding Louisiana's efforts to bring sustainable growth and reconstruction to the state. It is providing intensive technical assistance to the employees of many parishes, preparing them to take certification tests. Its professionals have not only provided technical expertise, but have also assisted parishes with limited or no building code departments at all.

IBTS has provided procedures and guidelines that parishes could incorporate, tailored with changes to suit the individual parishes' needs. Its professionals are also available

to answer questions from the contractors, builders, and homeowners about the current requirements and suggest ways in which the building code requirements can be implemented. Without this timely assistance, compliance with the state laws would have resulted in a slow down of much needed reconstruction.

Filling vital government needs like this is at the heart of the IBTS mission. IBTS was created in order to provide impartial evaluations, research and technical assistance to federal, state, and local governments. Partnering with governmental entities, it reduces the burdens on government and helps it by improving efficiency, increasing reliability and offering critical technical support, focusing on key areas such as:

- Building Design Reviews, Plan/peer reviews, and technical assistance in enforcement and
- Building Inspection
- Military Housing Plan Reviews and Inspections
- Housing Research in the Area of Advancing Technology
- Energy Conservation; Energy-STAR, Greenbuilding, Inspection and Certifications.

With a staff of over 140 professionals available to local government to meet their short-term and/or long-term needs, IBTS has been recognized by many jurisdictions to be a key source of support and assistance for its agencies. Its activities are guided by a Board comprised of representatives from its

founding state and local government organizations, including NACo, which is represented by Sustainability Leadership Team Chair, New Castle County, DE Councilman Robert Weiner. Because of its unique composition and 501(c)(3) non-profit status, often times counties may not require a competitive bidding process to utilize IBTS's services.

"Providing support to county building departments and assisting other parts of the county run more efficiently and effectively is an important focal point of our corporate mission. We are very proud of the work we are doing in Louisiana and are happy to play a small part in helping the region recover," said Ashok Goswami, CEO of IBTS.

Roland Dartz, Executive Director of the Louisiana Police Jury Association, an organization that represents all 64 parishes, stated that IBTS has proven its competence and commitment in Louisiana. "IBTS met with our members, assessed their immediate needs and hit the ground running. Their association with NACo and expertise of building code issues allowed our parishes to begin the long process of rebuilding and establish a defined building code office that will benefit our state for years to come."

Additional information about IBTS can be at their website www.ibts.org. For more on its partnership with the Center, contact Center Director Martin L. Harris at 202-661-8805.



While on the surface, this requirement seems simple and easily doable, the implementation proved to be anything but. The law required that the municipalities and parishes have certified professionals on staff or required third party providers with certified professionals to conduct plan reviews and inspections.

At the time the Act was passed, the whole State of Louisiana only

and provided the critical manpower, a staff with multi-disciplined certifications and extensive experience in related services, to assist the parishes in implementing the laws of the State of Louisiana. Under a contract with the Louisiana Department of Public Safety (DPS), in less than two months, IBTS has more than doubled the number of certified building code professionals in the state by



Reviewing product information and equipment at the Washington Parish Plan Review and Inspection Center.