

Unanimous Vote for the Removal of Safety Exception for Wired Glass

Portland, OR – October 30, 2002 – Today the Safety Glazing Ad Hoc Committee for the Oregon State Building Code voted unanimously to recommend the emergency adoption of a change to the Oregon State Structural Code 2406.3 to remove the wired glass safety glazing exception in fire assemblies and hazardous locations. If accepted by the Oregon State Structural Committee, wired glass will be required to meet the higher test standards applied to all other fire rated glazings, and will be required to comply with CPSC safety glazing standards in all occupancies. Greg Abel, chairman of Advocates for Safe Glass and co-chair of the Ad Hoc Committee, submitted the code change proposal for the State of Oregon as part of the organization's ongoing efforts to remove wired glass from locations where it can be impacted by children and adults.

On January 28, 2001, Greg's son, Jared Abel, sustained significant hand and arm injuries from wired glass while exiting a sports complex at the University of Oregon. After the accident, he and his father began investigating the use of wired glass in schools, sports facilities and other areas frequented by children and young adults. They found that wired glass had poor impact strength, dangerous breakage patterns, and inadequate regulation to protect public safety. These discoveries led to the formation of Advocates for Safe Glass, a non-profit organization founded by parents of children injured by glass and dedicated to the appropriate use of glass in public buildings.

"I would like to commend Oregon for being the first state in the nation to act on the overwhelming evidence regarding the hazards of wired glass to children and young adults, and to recommend the elimination of a safety exception that was granted to wired glass manufacturers over 20 years ago," states Greg Abel. "The exception was only supposed to last for two and a half years in order to give manufacturers time to develop a glazing that was both impact and fire safe. However, the exception was extended indefinitely after legal challenge by foreign wired glass manufacturers. As a result, wired glass in fire assemblies has been exempted from CPSC impact test requirements and subject to lower ANSI Z97.1 test standards for the last 25 years."

The Oregon vote in favor of the removal of the safety exception for wired glass comes on the heels of the recent IBC code hearings during which the ICC membership voted 300 to 158 in favor of changing IBC section 2406.1 to eliminate the lower ANSI Z97.1 test standards for wired glass and require compliance with CPSC Category II impact test requirements. While the ICC vote fell shy of the two-thirds majority needed for the code change by just five votes, the unanimous Oregon vote further supports the complete elimination of the wired glass safety exemption at the state and federal level.

For more information: afsgi@cs.com; www.safeglass.org
Contact: Greg Abel
Phone: 541-345-4121