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INTERNATIONAL BUILDING SAFETY WEEK RECOGNIZES IMPORTANCE OF SAFE CONSTRUCTION

(Salem) Most of us assume when we buy a home, rent an apartment, or walk into an office building or public facility that the structure is safe. We don't expect it to collapse. We don't worry about the danger of electrocution when we turn on a light switch or plug in an appliance. We trust that the plumbing will work properly and is not a health hazard. We expect the heating, air conditioning and other mechanical systems to operate safely and effectively.

"This doesn't happen by chance," says Joe Brewer, administrator of the Oregon Building Codes Division. "International Building Safety Week recognizes the importance of safe buildings and the professionals who make sure buildings meet basic safety standards in our communities. Public safety is our number one concern. We enforce building and fire codes that ensure the safe construction of all types of buildings."

The importance of codes, their regulation and enforcement is often overlooked until a catastrophic fire or other construction-related tragedy occurs. By inspecting buildings during and after construction, the Oregon Building Codes Division and local building departments help ensure that buildings in communities statewide are safe, sound, and accessible. State and local building agencies also enforce life-safety regulations, review building plans and issue building permits.

Recent earthquakes in India and in the state of Washington offer dramatic examples of how an effective building code system, or the lack thereof, can make a life-or-death difference for people and communities.

In Oregon, Governor John Kitzhaber has proclaimed April 8-14 International Building Safety Week. The Building Codes Division and the Oregon Building Officials Association have placed educational displays commemorating the event in the lobby of the State Capitol Building (April 11 & 12) and the Labor and Industries Building, 350 Winter Street NE (April 9-13), in Salem.

International Building Safety Week began in 1980 with the goal of promoting the use, enforcement and understanding of building codes. It also recognizes professional code enforcement officials who attend regular training seminars to make sure they are aware of the latest code changes and technological advances in construction.

International Building Safety Week is endorsed by model code organizations including the International Code Council, BOCA International, International Conference of Building Officials, Southern Building Code Congress International, Council of American Building Officials, National Conference of States on Building Codes and Standards, and the World Organization of Building Officials. With input from code enforcement officials, these organizations are involved in researching and publishing code books, providing training and technical information, and offering other support services to code enforcement officials, fire service professionals, architects, engineers, and builders.

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