



## Position of wired glass in the 2004 IBC Supplement

By Thom Zaremba

**W**ired glass still remains the top-performing fire-rated glazing material in the United States. Unfortunately, it has fallen victim to a weakness that exists in our code development process. For at least the last 10 years, competitors have sought to increase market share by reducing the areas where the codes allow wired glass to be used.

Without regard to whether any technical support existed, code officials at the International Code Council's Final Action Agenda in May at Overland Park, Kan., said, "Ten years of debate is enough," and voted to adopt S85-03/04, further restricting the permissible use of wired glass in hazardous locations.

Wired glass is still permitted in all non-hazardous locations. Meaning it can be used in virtually all window and transom locations. However, in jurisdictions adopting the 2003-04 International Building Code Supplement, it may no longer be used in hazardous locations.


Was the decision to adopt S85-03/04 good or bad? Right or wrong? Unfortunately, the Overland Park vote overturned the ICC Technical Committee's overwhelming vote to reject S85-03/04 on the ground that its proponents had failed to prove any technical justification for the proposal. And no new evidence was submitted to overturn that decision at Overland Park.

Under the rules, the ICC membership can vote to overturn the decisions of its technical committees for a good reason or for no reason at all. While ICC's technical committees are required to state a supporting basis for their decisions, no such requirement exists at Final

Action Agenda hearings. There, ICC members cast their votes in the relative anonymity among hundreds of participants. As a result, it is not possible to tell whether any particular change has been adopted for a good reason or for no reason, other than, perhaps, to end years of debate.

The membership's vote overturning the Technical Committee decision rejecting S85-03/04 was appealed by wired glass manufacturers on the basis that several rule violations had occurred at Overland Park. An appeals panel was convened in Chicago. It made recommendations to the ICC board that the rule violations raised in the appeal had not effected the outcome of the Overland Park vote.

The wired-glass manufacturers then asked the ICC board not to adopt the recommendations of the appeals panel. At a hearing held in September in Salt Lake City, Utah, they asked the ICC board to send the matter back to the appeals panel because the panel had failed to determine whether any rule violations had occurred at Overland Park. The wired-glass manufacturers also argued that if a rule violation had in fact occurred, the appropriate outcome was not to guess whether the rule violation had effected the vote, but instead to send the matter back to the membership for a new vote. Following a closed-door session, the ICC board adopted the recommendations of the appeals panel without comment.

Many new, fire-rated products are now on the market. More may emerge as manufacturers attempt to meet the complex web of 45-minute fire and hose-stream test requirements of one-hour corridors, along with the impact, weathering and other requirements specified in 16 C.F.R. § 1201 for glazing used in hazardous locations. All will undoubtedly cost more than wired glass. But none is likely to be more durable or capable of stopping the spread of flame, smoke and hot gasses in a fire than wired glass. 

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