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Code Green

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The first green building standard designed to be adopted as mandatory code is about to be published. The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers in conjunction with the Illuminating Engineering Society and the U.S Green Building Council are in the final stages of developing Standard 189.1P, entitled Standard for the Design of High-Performance, Green Buildings. A preview of Standard 189.1P can be viewed at www.ashrae.org/publications/page/927.

Standard 189.1P applies to all commercial buildings and residential buildings taller than three stories. The Standard is written in language designed to be adopted as code and provides minimum requirements for a building to be considered green. Standard 189.1P seeks to address all aspects of designing and constructing green buildings including, improving indoor air quality, using environmentally friendly materials and resources, conserving water and energy efficiency. It is designed to be adopted by jurisdictions seeking to mandate that all building in that jurisdiction be green buildings. Even if it is not adopted by jurisdictions, Standard 189.1P may become the standard of care in the design and construction of green buildings.

While Standard 189.1P will be helpful to the environment, its impact on the construction industry may not be as positive. If a jurisdiction adopts Standard 189.1P, designers and contractors who may not be green building savvy will face a dilemma — either put themselves out as being capable of complying with Standard 189.1P or face going out of business. The likely result is that parties not qualified to handle green projects will take them on nonetheless. This will inevitably result in a greater number of design and construction deficiencies, which will certainly result in an increased number of lawsuits.

That being said, Standard 189.1P could be a positive for those designers and contractors who prove that they are capable of meeting the requirements of Standard 189.1P. For those capable of satisfying the Standard, they will create for themselves a valuable position in the marketplace almost certainly leading to increased business.

Standard 189.1P is the first green building code, but it certainly will not be the last. Green buildings appear to be the wave of future, and it may be wise for those in the construction industry to review Standard 189.1P and identify the skills and knowledge that would be required to satisfy Standard 189.1P.

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