

September 26, 2002

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
SD-644 Dirksen Senate Office Building

Building codes that have been adopted by local governments can play a key role in the fight against the West Nile Virus and other mosquito-borne diseases. The best way to prevent the spread of the West Nile Virus is to attack the breeding ground of the mosquitoes that could potentially carry the disease. Areas of stagnant water should be eliminated. In addition, screens over windows and doors should be “bug tight.” Most people willingly maintain their properties according to health standards, but in some cases, certain guidelines must be enforced. The ICC’s International Codes can help. The International Property Maintenance Code® (IPMC) can assist local officials in enforcing the cleanup of existing properties. The IPMC® can combat the spread of mosquitoes and mosquito-borne viruses.

Local jurisdictions can contribute to the mitigation of this virus by adopting and enforcing the International Property Maintenance Code® (IPMC). The provisions in Chapter 3 of this code, when enforced by local jurisdictions, can assist in the slowing down of the spread of this virus and other infectious diseases by requiring that property owners meet certain minimum standards in the upkeep of their property. Requirements such as: 1) the property must be graded and drained so that there will be no accumulation of stagnant water; 2) a requirement for the proper drainage of roofs and gutters; 3) a requirement that addresses the accumulation and disposal of garbage; and 4) requirements that address the extermination of insects. The provisions of this code apply to both residential and commercial structures.

Other provisions of the IPMC® are also useful to local jurisdictions. The code also addresses vacant structures and land, requiring that these properties not “cause a blighting problem or adversely affect the public health and safety.” It addresses weeds and excessive plant growth. All of these sections of the IPMC® provide local jurisdictions the enforcement tools they need in order to require property owners to clean up unsanitary conditions on their property that harbor the growth and proliferation of the mosquito population.

Local jurisdictions have a powerful and useful tool in the IPMC® to assist in the fight against the West Nile Virus. Working in conjunction with local health departments, they can help ensure the health and safety of their communities. Currently the IPMC® is being enforced in twenty-

The Honorable Edward M. Kennedy
Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions
September 26, 2002
Page 3

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this important national health problem.
Please feel free to contact me if I may be of any assistance to your Committee.

Sincerely,

Sara C. Yerkes
Vice President of Public Policy

cc: Members of Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee
Members of Senate Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,
Restructuring and the District of Columbia
Uwe Timpke
Bob Heinrich, Chief Executive Officer
Dom Sims, Senior Vice President