



# Position Statement

## Tall Wood, Mass Timber Buildings

*Submitted by the IAFC Fire & Life Safety Section*

Many communities are working toward building sustainable properties that can appear non-conventional to the fire service. As part of the 2021 International Code Council Family of Codes, a change to building construction segments of the International Building Code, new heights and areas will be allowed with wood materials that meet the technical requirements for Mass Timber.

The new Mass Timber (also known as type IVA, IVB, and IVC) is unlike previous materials used in the construction of buildings. Through the code development process, there were multiple changes from the construction method, height and area tables, secondary water supply, and construction safeguards.

The International Association of Fire Chiefs encourages the following actions:

- Urge communities who are considering new mass-timber buildings to utilize the code provisions found in the 2021 ICC Code documents. There are many opportunities for consideration of buildings that may be taller, larger, or without the protection that was studied. Communities should continue to use the codes and standards that were established through the model code development process.
- Encourage national organizations to continue to educate the code enforcement services so adequate plan review and inspections are performed to keep projects safe and within the scope of the codes and standards.
- Provide education for emergency responders to better understand how the buildings and systems may react during an emergency such as a fire or other incident.
- Educate contractors, architects, and other professionals on the needed safeguards for tall mass-timber construction through the construction process and occupancy.
- National technical bodies and laboratories provide additional technical resources through the study of materials, processes, engineering, and real-world examples that can further enhance the safety of the buildings for the occupants and firefighters that will work inside of these structures during an emergency.
- Continue to refine codes and standards through solid research, best practices, latest data and code development to provide the highest level of safety for our occupants and firefighters as it relates to mass timber.

The IAFC urges our membership to continue to advocate for the safety of our community, citizens, and firefighters in the built environment. That advocacy can continue with the utilization of current non-modified codes and standards.

This position paper replaces the previous position by the IAFC Board of Directors dated April 12, 2018.

**Originally Submitted:** 12 April 2018

**Modification Adopted by the IAFC Board of Directors:** 09 JAN 2020