

National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee
National Institute of Standards and Technology

December 20, 2007

The Honorable Bart Gordon
Chairman
Committee on Science and Technology
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

I am pleased to submit the 2007 Annual Report of the National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee (NCSTAC) of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST). The Committee serves as NIST's advisor on implementation of the National Construction Safety Team (NCST) Act (P.L. 107-231) and our report reflects our views as an independent, private sector body. Because no new NCST investigations were undertaken in 2007, this letter constitutes our entire report for this past calendar year.

The Committee met once during 2007 by public teleconference to review the progress to date on the Dissemination and Technical Assistance Program (DTAP) and the continuing investigation of the collapse of World Trade Center 7 (WTC 7), the third building included in the NIST study. At this meeting, the Committee also provided the opportunity to receive comments from the public on the content of our 2007 Report to Congress. In addition to this full Committee meeting, discussions were held with the individual members, in their capacity as subject-matter experts, to review the progress on the WTC 7 investigation. Several technical suggestions were made as well as comments on how the findings should be transmitted to the architectural, engineering and code bodies during those meetings.

There was one change to the Committee membership in 2007. Dr. Kathleen Tierney, resigned from the NCSTAC in order to serve on the newly formed Advisory Committee on Earthquake Hazards Reduction. As reported last year, both NIST and the Chair have agreed that it would not be efficient to appoint new members to replace those who resigned or were not re-appointed when their terms expired until after the WTC investigations are completed. Committee membership can then be determined by the technical expertise required by any future NCST investigations that are undertaken.

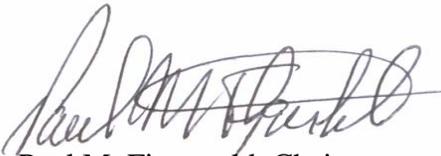
During 2007, NIST staff continued to work with various public sector Codes and Standards organizations and the National Institute of Building Science (NIBS) in effecting construction changes in the nation's building codes and architectural and structural engineering practice groups. Eight code changes were adopted for the Supplement to the 2006 International Building Code. Forty-seven proposals for change responsive to the recommendations of the World Trade Center Investigation have been received by the International Code Council for consideration during the 2007/2008 code cycle. Similarly, 17 proposals responsive to the recommendations of the World Trade Center recommendations are active in the National Fire Protection Association's (NFPA) process and may result in changes to NFPA's model codes in the next edition.

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The Committee continues to support full implementation of the NCST Act. Its unique features such as subpoena power, open communication with the engineering and architectural communities during an investigation rather than after it is completed and NIST's commitment to support the development of improved Codes and Standards through DTAP provide a powerful public service. Although not used in the WTC or Station nightclub investigations (for different reasons), subpoena power provides NIST leverage in conducting safety team investigations where litigation or political concerns might prevent access to the disaster site or to necessary forensic evidence and witnesses.

To repeat the comments made in our 2006 report, the Committee is increasingly concerned that recommendations made in our previous reports to Congress for permanent funding for Safety Team investigations has not been acted on. Once again, we re-affirm our opinion that NIST cannot effectively implement its role under the Act unless Congress and the Administration establish sustained annual support. The Committee strongly believes such sustained funding is justified given the proven impact and actions the private sector has undertaken as a direct result of NIST findings of the WTC Towers and Station nightclub investigations. We believe a greater impact will result once the WTC 7 investigation is completed and the information is released to Code bodies. Therefore, we once again urge Congress to provide needed support in FY 2008.

Sincerely,



Paul M. Fitzgerald, Chair
National Construction Safety Team Advisory Committee

Robert D. Hanson, Member
Forman A. Williams, Member
David S. Collins, Member
Charles Thornton, Member

Not Participating in the Preparation of This Report: John M. Barsom, Member

cc: The Honorable Ralph M. Hall, Ranking Minority Member
John Sullivan
James Turner
Shyam Sunder (DFO)