

Construction the **Specifier**

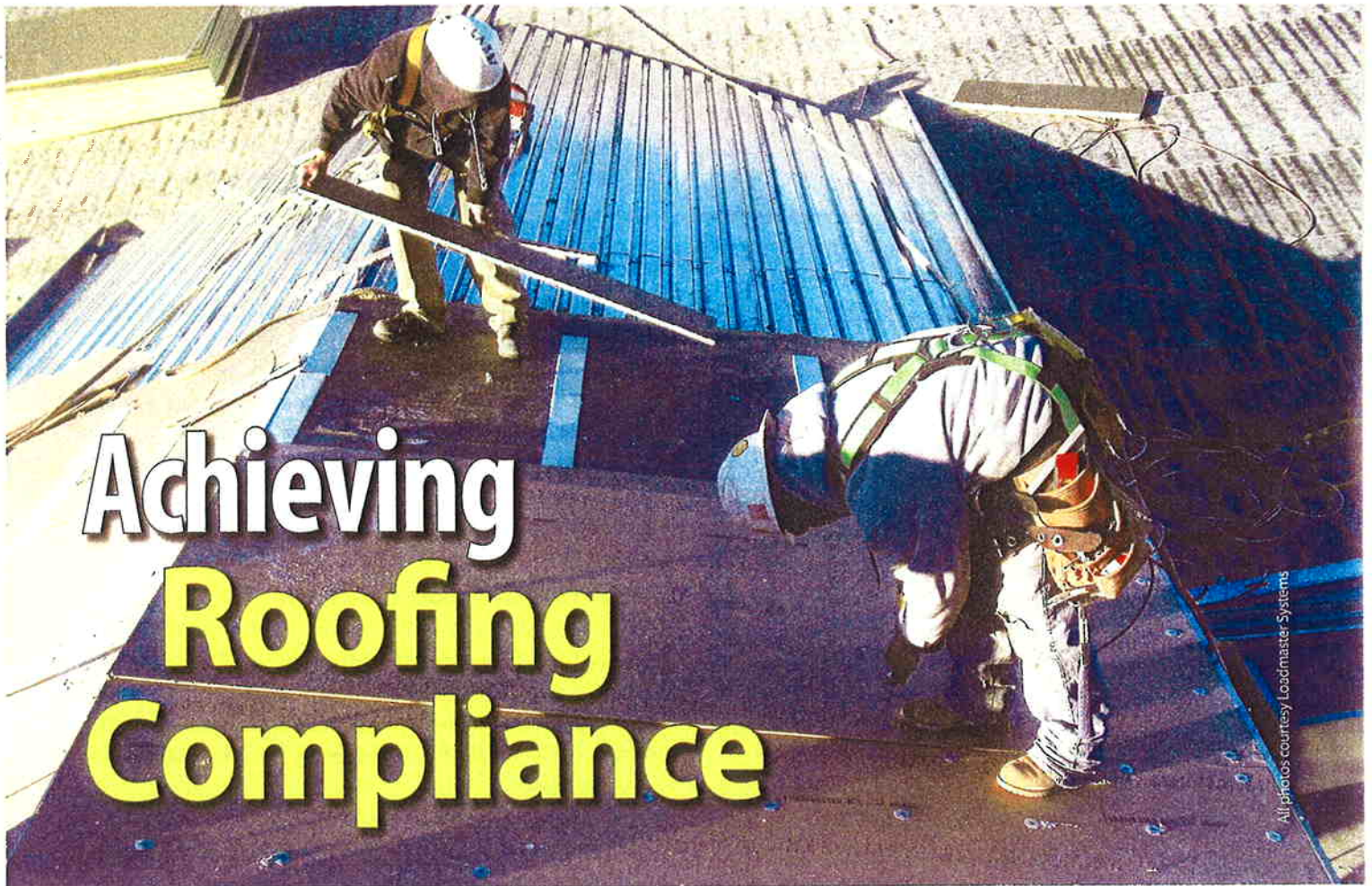
Solutions for the Construction Industry March 2009

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Achieving Roofing Compliance

The legal impact of ASCE 7

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The *International Building Code (IBC)* relies heavily on American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) 7, *Minimum Design of Loads for Buildings and Other Structures*, with respect to wind loads on roof decks and coverings on buildings. Architects should be cognizant not only of this requirement, but also of the potential liability they face where a roof deck or covering is deemed noncompliant with the code, particularly if the assembly fails catastrophically.

Due to the complexities of understanding and testing for ASCE 7 compliance, architects may rely on other design professionals or roof deck/covering manufacturers for required testing. If an architect chooses this path to satisfy the ASCE 7 wind load determinations, he or she should understand how courts and juries in the United States have attributed fault between the architect and testing professional or manufacturer. Architects will likely face less legal liability by depending on another specialized professional or roof deck/covering manufacturer to ensure compliance with ASCE requirements.

As the dominant code regulating U.S. building construction practices, the *International Building Code* has been adopted at the state or local level in all 50 states, as well as Washington, D.C. Only Colorado, Tennessee, and Mississippi have not adopted the code as a statewide standard, although it has been implemented at certain local levels in all three states.¹ (For example, in Tennessee, the State Fire Marshal's Office has adopted the 2006 *IBC*.) Therefore, design professionals in every state should be familiar with *IBC* requirements.

This article focuses on the new wind load requirements under *IBC*, with respect to roof decks and coverings. It is important architects comply with these codes, while understanding the legal implications of delegating testing requirements for wind load compliance to other professionals.

IBC and ASCE 7

The *IBC* contains an array of requirements for roofing, including specific ones for covering installation, construction documents, and loads. With respect to wind loads, the primary requirement in the current (2006) version of *IBC*