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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 20, 2009

AIA-PECONIC COMMENDS NYS FOR KEEPING WINDOWLESS DESIGN METHOD IN THE CODE

The Peconic Chapter of the American Institute of Architects applauds New York State's decision to retain Partially Enclosed Design in the Building Code, despite its elimination from the model International Building Code. This engineering method allows structures to be designed without strengthened windows, doors and skylights, by constructing frames, floors, and roofs to meet higher pressure standards for wind storm resistance. While lauding this step, AIA Peconic urges New York State to go further by making Partially Enclosed Design a permanent part of the Code and by developing prescriptive and engineering standards to make Partially Enclosed Design more accessible to Building Owners and Architects.

The NYS Building Code currently emphasizes Design Pressure engineering, which requires protection of openings (windows, doors, and skylight), through its inclusion of prescriptive standards for this design. AIA Peconic ascertains that 'opening protection' increases the health, safety, and welfare risk to occupants and their rescuers during an emergency, by restricting an inhabitant's ability to escape or a rescuer's ability to determine if a structure is occupied, particularly in the event of fire.

While recognizing Partially Enclosed Design, the current version of the Building Code incorrectly requires, in addition to a strengthened structure, that the wind pressure resistance of the openings be calculated, even though the doors, windows and skylights are assumed to be missing. AIA Peconic states that this inadvertently does more to protect a building's interior contents - and reduce insurance claims - than to protect the safety of its occupants. Because Partially Enclosed Design may only be engineered and contains this added flaw, using it is discouraged by weighing the benefits (windows and other openings still have to be, dangerously and implausibly, strengthened) against the added costs (the strengthened structure).

Electing Partially Enclosed Design over Design Pressure should always be a matter of a choice that may be reflected in insurance rates but should not be made in the Code. The Code needs to turn to a new strategy to complete the wind-resisting system of the Design Pressure Method *without* threatening lives. The Building Code should focus on its true priority, protecting people before contents.

A copy of the Chapter's recent letter, as well as their letter to the State which addresses other issues in the Code, can be found on the Chapter's website, <http://AIAPeconic.org>.

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