

FINAL CERTIFICATION OF NC ACCESSIBILITY CODE

On November 28, 2005, *North Carolina became the sixth state in the nation to receive ADA certification of its statewide accessibility code.* This distinguished status was so noted in recent communications with the NC Department of Insurance (DOI) by Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General for Civil Rights, US Department of Justice (USDOJ). The Department of Justice provided a summary of its final determination of the North Carolina Accessibility Code's equivalency and amplification of its meaning in the Federal Register (December 8, 2005).

As specified in the Federal Register, certification means that the 2002 North Carolina Accessibility Code with 2004 Amendments (NCAC) meets or exceeds the new construction and alterations requirements of title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act, and further "...constitutes rebuttable evidence, in any enforcement proceeding, that a building constructed or altered in accordance with the NCAC meets or exceeds the requirements of the ADA."

Members of the disability community, agencies and other advocates across the state are to be applauded for their efforts to shepherd and safeguard this certification process. The NC Department of Insurance and the NC Building Code Council, whose code development, adoptions and amendments helped make this a reality, are to be congratulated. Further, as noted by the US Department of Justice, special thanks are extended to Jeff Kanner and Laurel Wright of the Department of Insurance staff for their cooperation and hard work to help achieve this goal.

The NC Department of Vocational Rehabilitation, along with its partnership support from Center for Universal Design (part of NCSU's College of Design), were pleased also to be a part of this effort.

Perhaps the best outcome of this certification process is stated in a recent letter from the USDOJ to the NC DOI: *"The State of North Carolina has set a fine example for other jurisdictions to follow and its effort will make a lasting difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities."*

A ceremony marking the occasion was held in Cary, NC on February 9, 2006. Speakers at the event included Wan J. Kim, Assistant Attorney General, US DOJ, Civil rights Division; Jim Long, Commissioner, North Carolina Department of Insurance; Dan Tingen, Chairman, North Carolina Building Code Council; and, Leslie Young, Director of Design, Center for Universal Design, NC State University. Speakers noted the pivotal roles of Ron Mace and John Dalrymple, NC Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, (retired).