

Sponsor Statement for HB 437

Uniform Mechanical Code

An Act adopting a version of the Uniform Mechanical Code for the state and providing for adoption of future versions of the code; and relating to the building code adopted by the state and to other safety codes.

Released: February 20, 2002
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HB 437 seeks to correct a problem that has arisen through the adoption of the international mechanical code by the State Fire Marshal's office in the Department of Public Safety.

Contrary to existing statute, which requires the adoption of Uniform Mechanical Code (UMC), the Fire Marshal's office has adopted the international mechanical code (IMC) put out by the International Code Council. While advocates of the ICC version believe it is more progressive than the UMC, the fact is that this new code is creating problems for tradesmen who work under the codes.

First, the IMC allows greater latitude in interpretation, which may be good for the designers and building officials who support it, but not for the building contractors who install heating, air conditioning, and other mechanical systems. They prefer the black-and-white direction of the UMC. There is also less chance of disputes with building inspectors under the UMC.

Second, the adoption of the IMC has created a conflict at occupational licensing, because current law requires that mechanical contractors be tested under the UMC.

HB 437 corrects these problems by stipulating that the 2000 edition of the UMC is the one officially adopted for use in Alaska. It also allows the DPS to adopt subsequent editions if they better meet the state's needs.