

No, The Fastener Isn't "Code Approved"

The Words

We have seen claims of "Code Approved" printed on some fastener cartons and literature. We have also seen variations such as "Code Accepted," "ICBO Approved," "ICBO Certified," and "ICBO Approval Qualifications."

The Problem

The words are misleading and can not be properly used. If builders assume that the use of the words guarantees building code compliance, builders can get in serious trouble. Worse, just because someone claims "approval" doesn't mean that the product meets code requirements. Building officials are justifiably upset when someone claims to have made that determination. Only the local building official, by ordinance, has the legal right to "approve".

Why "Code Approved" Doesn't Make Sense

"Code Approved" on a fastener carton implies that the fasteners are approved by all building codes. But, think about it. Can any product be accepted by all building codes?

- Some towns write their own code. Others adopt a "model code." (See the Model Building Codes section of our website for information on what model building codes are.)
- There are many codes, and they are different; the *International Building Code*, the *International Residential Code*, the *National Building Code*, the *One and Two Family Dwelling Code*, the *Standard Building Code*, and the *Uniform Building Code* to name a few.
- Codes are periodically revised. Historically, most model building codes have been revised annually by supplements, accumulated supplements, or reprinted revisions.
- When codes are revised, not all towns immediately adopt the revisions.
- Sometimes towns adopt a code verbatim; sometimes they modify the code they adopt.
- Some code sections are subject to interpretation. (This is especially true for sections on corrosion resistance.)

Bottom line, code requirements in two neighboring towns could be the same, or very different.

For Fasteners, It's Even More Basic

Fasteners are not inherent “okay” or “not okay.” Suitability depends on the application and is tied to a fastening schedule. For example:

- Four 8d common nails can be used for some framing connections. Three are insufficient. (Fastener quantity per connection is important.)
- An 8d nail might be suitable for attaching roof sheathing, but four 8d nail nails won't hold a sheet of plywood on a roof. (Fastener spacing is important for attaching sheathing or doubling a stud.)
- A 10d common nail, at one spacing, might be fine for shear wall sheathing. At a tighter spacing, the same nail may only be okay if 3-by framing members are used. (Tight spacing of large-diameter nails can split 2-by framing members.)

A fastener is only “okay” in the context of a particular connection.

It's Not Just Dimensions

Fastener dimensions, spacing and count per connection are important. But so are other fastener properties. Requirements for corrosion resistance vary with the connection, building location, local code and materials. If nail shanks or staple legs are not “stiff” enough, the nailed or stapled connection won't have the strength that the code, or architect, or structural engineer assume. Some codes, like the 2000 and 2003 International Building Codes, specify and require that fasteners meet minimums published in an ASTM standard. For other codes, the minimum requirements are imbedded in other documents referenced by the codes.

Some Guidance - Evaluation Reports

There are documents which can help you make decisions on fasteners. “Evaluation reports” are issued by subsidiary organizations to the organizations that write the model building codes. For fasteners, these reports present findings as to whether fasteners can be used in fastening schedules in the model codes. The reports are really reports on expanded versions of the model code fastening schedules.

Evaluation reports require fastener testing to show that they meet code requirements. Examples are adherence to dimensional tolerances and shank stiffness.

Evaluation reports held by ISANTA for its members do two things. They show which popular sizes of power driven fasteners can be used in place of other fasteners listed in model code fastening schedules. For power driven fasteners that are listed in model code fastening schedules the report shows that the fasteners meet code requirements for things like dimensions.

But not even evaluation reports mean “code approved.” These reports are evidence upon which a building official may approve use of the fasteners. Approval is a power of the building official, and only the building official. All other statements of approval are opinions, and nothing more.

INTERNATIONAL STAPLE, NAIL AND TOOL ASSOCIATION
512 West Burlington Avenue, Suite 203, La Grange, IL 60525-2245
Telephone- (708) 482-8138. Facsimile- (708) 482-8186.
[Isanta at Ameritech dot net](mailto:Isanta@Ameritech.net) www.isanta.org