

BENEFITS OF INTERIOR DESIGN LEGISLATION

PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND CONSUMER AWARENESS

Receiving a degree in Interior Design requires skill competence in many cross-disciplinary fields. The public is vastly unaware that Interior Designers may receive a four-year FIDER accredited degree in Interior Design and become certified by the NCIDQ examination that tests minimum standards for Certified Interior Designers. Thus, the skills and responsibilities of Interior Designers and the working functions of the profession are gravely misunderstood and expressively misrepresented to the public and incoming Interior Design students through popular “reality-designing-interiors” TV shows like “Trading Spaces” and “Designer Finals”.

COMMERCIAL AND RESIDENTIAL CODE COMPLIANCE- DEFINING CLEAR PRACTICE STANDARDS

Codes are systematized bodies of law adopted by federal, state, and local jurisdictions to insure public safety. The International Building Code (IBC) and the International Residential Code (IRC) developed by the International Code Council (ICC) are accepted as the major building code models utilized throughout the world. Although the codebooks incorporate laws for many trades, a Registered Interior Designer by practice must adhere to the following codes as they directly impact the safety of interior space design; use/occupancy requirements and classifications, construction types, fire resistant material and construction, interior finish specifications, means of egress, and accessibility as regulated by the American Disabilities Act (ADA).

“CAPTIVE CONSUMERS”- PROVIDING PUBLIC SAFETY INITIATIVES

A “captive consumer” is a person or persons using offices and public spaces such as hospitals, stores, airports, and other non-live-in institution space and student or public housing in which finishes and furnishings are pre-selected and installed without consumer participation. They are considered “captive” because they have not been directly involved in the selection of the interior materials, furniture, and furnishings they are forced to use. Interior spaces designed improperly by uneducated persons practicing Interior Design can contribute to lost revenue, liability lawsuits, increased insurance costs, illness/hospitalization, injury/disability, and even death. For example, uneven flooring transitions, unmarked flooring height changes, un-rated floors (involving floor traction), inadequate lighting, confusing flooring patterns, and color combinations that produce optical illusions all contribute to incidences of slip and fall; a leading cause of injury of which 300,000 disabling incidences and 11,000 fatalities occur each year. Other safety problems Interior Designers study to ensure public protection and welfare directly relate to the relationships of people and the buildings/homes they occupy. It is important that Interior Designers make educated assessments of client’s age; abilities, allergies and any potential design limitations or specialized project requirements in order to plan spaces that comprehensively aid in the function and code compliance of the interior environment.

LIABILITY AND PUBLIC SAFETY- ENFORCING THE ETHICAL PRACTICE OF INTERIOR DESIGN

The establishment of an Interior Design State Regulatory Board in Washington State would proactively monitor Interior Designers maintaining liability for any ensuing malpractice negatively affecting the public. The board would be able to address all aspects of professional negligence; implied warranty or misrepresentation, implied fitness warranty, breach of contract, joint and several liability, and liability without fault for design defects. Individuals found in violation of any of the above would be subjected to fines, penalties, or suspension imposed by the governing board. Regulation would raise the expertise skill level of Interior Designers strengthening the quality, safety, and ethical Interior Design practice further encouraging the competitive bidding of design services provided to the public.