

MEDIA RELEASE

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Despite benefits for renovation projects, use of rehabilitation code is limited

TROY, MICHIGAN— Prior to the Michigan Rehabilitation Code's adoption on December 31, 2003, building owners and architects doing repairs, renovations, or rehabilitation for existing buildings typically worked within the strict guidelines for new buildings, using the Michigan Building Code. This work can now be done under the rehabilitation code, and as a result, projects within existing facilities could become less costly, less complex, and more attractive for building owners, according to Michigan-based full-service engineering firm Peter Basso Associates. However, despite the significant benefits of the code, there has been limited use of it two full years after its adoption— perhaps due to unfamiliarity by building owners and designers.

The introduction of the Michigan Rehabilitation Code, modeled closely after the International Existing Building Code, sparked a change in the regulatory environment that governs work done within existing buildings. This code outlines requirements for eight classifications of work, including repairs, three levels of alterations, building relocation, changes of occupancy, additions, and historical buildings. Because any work done on an existing building is no longer subject to the standards for new construction, the rehabilitation code is favorable for building owners, architects, and engineers. It gives owners, who may be putting off major upgrades because of a fear of expensive code issues, an opportunity to make significant improvements in building comfort and performance without full compliance with new building codes. But despite the clear benefits, many individuals are unaware that when working on existing facilities, the Michigan Rehabilitation Code— rather than the Michigan Building Code— should govern their projects. As a result, they are not reaping the full benefits or accurately assessing the related cost, requirements, or design options for a particular project. "This code is generally less stringent and provides more flexibility in design than the building codes for new construction. The rehabilitation code often allows legacy systems to be re-used and modified within limits without bringing them into full compliance with new building codes," says Terry Cleis, Senior Associate at Peter Basso Associates.

Cleis adds, "Under these regulations, facility owners likely face less costly improvements, renovations, reconfigurations, and additions, especially because they may be able to make use of existing equipment. Systems and equipment that still function or are salvageable can often be retained, eliminating costs associated with the upgrade in the past." By understanding all building codes and their applications and stipulations, building owners and architects alike can better

evaluate projects for the facility, have more flexibility with their design, and improve the environment in a less complex and less costly way.

Peter Basso Associates is a leading full-service engineering firm skilled in the fields of mechanical and electrical engineering, energy management, lighting design, commissioning, and communication technologies. Headquartered in Troy, Michigan, the firm primarily serves the Corporate/Governmental, K-12 Schools, Healthcare/Laboratory, and Higher Education markets.

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