A portion of the 18-member board is seen in action at one of its meetings, which are held almost once each month.

An Agency “For” the Industry

NIBS is a Quasi-Public Agency Designed to Improve Construction’s State of the Arts

The flow of science, invention, and new technology for the construction industry is as plentiful as ever. That’s the flow “for” the industry. It doesn’t necessarily mean the flow “into” the industry.

To improve the introduction of new developments into both the private and public construction markets, Congress established the National Institute of Building Sciences (NIBS).

Many wall and ceiling contractors have heard of NIBS. But few contractors in the interior and exterior finishing systems industry — as well as few in other areas of the industry — know all that much about NIBS and what it’s supposed to do.

NIBS is a nonprofit, non-governmental organization that was actually created by Congress to encourage a more rational regulatory environment for the benefit of the building industry and the general public.

It is dedicated to becoming a national, authoritative source for the evaluation of building technology. Rather than impose another government layer, Congress set up the quasi-public NIBS to work directly with both public and private sectors on the betterment of housing and building.

NIBS, now operating, will supply its findings to existing bodies for the development of more rational codes and standards using performance criteria, where appropriate.

Here are several objectives that the Board of Directors, all appointed by the President, established:

- develop a system for uniform testing and evaluation procedures for performance criteria and standards development.
- set up a system for prequalifying materials, products, components, subsystems and systems on the basis of performance capability.
- work with model code groups and regulatory bodies to develop building codes based on performance standards.
- speed up the flow of new products and systems into the building market with a system for qualifying innovations that meet the performance standards.
- devise equitable dispute resolutions arising from development of new performance standards.

In addition to the above general goals, NIBS will also be undertaking a series of specific projects.

These projects include identification of areas where new or improved standards are needed, and the development of a national data collection and dissemination system for the entire building community.

It will address itself also to various topical issues confronting the public...
NIBS

From page 17

such as hazards reduction and energy conservation in new and existing buildings.

The technique to achieve all of these goals and objectives is unique in that NIBS is expected to become self-supporting eventually. It will for the present be working with existing research organizations, testing facilities, voluntary standards organizations and model code groups with the continuing advice of the building community and the public.

A Consultative Council has been established to provide the two-way communications that will be necessary to provide this advice. It is composed of representatives of trade associations, building trade unions, professional design and engineering societies, regulatory agencies and consumer groups.

The Council also has as members public and private-testing and standards-writing organizations.

One of the first highly active projects involves setting up an Insulation Task Force to investigate the mounting confusion in the construction process over the uses of insulation in all types of building throughout the United States.

The group totals 32 members and will be making a series of recommendations on criteria and standards to Congress, federal agencies, all segments of the building community and the public.

This will be done in conjunction with the formulation of a action plan for the new National Energy Conservation Standard for New Buildings. This standard is being developed by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Energy.

Besides work on insulation, the Council is also undertaking to set up a benchmark study on existing methods used in developing criteria and standards which are the basis of regulatory bodies and code work.

This project is complemented by a system for collecting, assembling, and storing as well as the dissemination of data on performance criteria and standards.

NIBS was provided with initial capital funding by Congress but is supposed to become self-sustaining as soon as possible.

To do this, the institute will depend on membership dues and fees derived from educational, data collection and dissemination, and also will seek grants from private organizations and governmental agencies.

Research grants from private and public sources and subscriptions services are expected to bring in a large portion of the institute’s funding.

If nothing else, many construction industry leaders hope that NIBS can provide greater encouragement for uniformity in building codes wherever appropriate. It is expected to encourage the adoption, by all regulatory jurisdictions, of one of the three nationally recognized model building codes: Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA), International Conference of Building Officials (ICBO), and the Southern Building Code Congress (SBCC).

Further information about NIBS is available by writing its public information department at 1730 Pennsylvania Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C.