

ESTABLISHING A NEW STANDARD

When a company introduces a new construction product or technology to Mexico it will probably find that a product standard has not yet been established. When no Mexican standard exists, there is a tendency to adopt an international standard. This can be advantageous to Canadian suppliers, because competing local products may be sub-standard. But to be enforceable in Mexico, the international standard will generally have to be converted to a *NOM*, which can be a long and complex process.

The *Dirección General de Normas*, (*DGN*), Bureau of Standards, an intergovernmental body headed by *SECOFI*, is responsible for setting new standards. There are 42 National Consulting Committees, each responsible for a specific service or industry sector. The private sector is represented on these committees through national chambers of commerce or industry associations. The standard setting process is often initiated by the industrial association representing manufacturers of that product.

A Canadian company will need assistance from a local representative if it wants to establish a standard for a new product. The partner must be willing to pursue this objective and should have a reasonably high profile in the industry. Ideally, the partner will sit on the applicable Standard Committee. The Canadian exporter can assist in the standard-setting process by joining the appropriate industry association and "pre-selling" the product concept to association members. Establishing a standard within a reasonable time frame will require the lobbying strength of the association.

The Canadian Standards Association (CSA) can also assist in developing new standards in Mexico. The three NAFTA signatories are currently working to develop and coordinate standards for plumbing products and fixtures, plastic pipe, steel construction and welding. The CSA welcomes input from Canadian manufacturers in these and other sectors.

New mandatory *NOMs* are published in the *Diario Oficial*, the National Gazette which is the Government publication of new laws. They go into effect immediately. Voluntary *NOMs* are published in the *Gaceta de Industria, Comercio y Servicios*, and only their titles are published in the *Diario Oficial*.

BUILDING CODES

Unlike *NOMS*, which are controlled by one federal body, Mexican building codes vary from state to state. The codes set by el *Departamento del Distrito Federal*, the Department of the Federal District, are generally the most strict and are often modified for use in other regions. The building codes are specified to meet the requirements established in the *Reglamento de Construcciones del Departamento del Distrito Federal*, the Manual for the Construction Regulation from the Department of the Federal District. The laws are designed to guarantee livability, functionality, sanitation, environmental compatibility, access to transportation, safety in emergencies, structural safety and integration with the urban image of neighbouring buildings. The *Reglamento* is updated and published in the *Diario Oficial*. Complete details of technical standards and codes can be obtained from

