Building Safety
By Martin Van Berlo, Emmet County Building Dept.

This month’s article is not specific to any code section, but rather, what the codes are all about. Building Codes, whether one in particular, or all of them together, are written and enforced for a common goal. That goal is to provide sound, solid, safe structures for us to live in, work in and play in. When inspected and approved, construction meeting the minimum requirements of the code should provide buildings that are sound and safe for use.

In the up-coming months there are 2 events that should help to remind us of building safety. The first event is at the beginning of the month of May and the second is the whole month of June.

The week of May 6 - 12, 2007 has been designated “Building Safety Week”. Sponsored by The International Code Council Foundation (ICCF), “Building Safety Week” is considered a time for Building Inspection Departments to make the public aware of, and to promote, the importance of the building codes and building safety. It is important that contractors, as well as do-it-yourselfers, develop a good working relationship with their local Inspection Department. The Inspection Department can be a very useful tool in a construction project. The Inspection Department can provide a contractor or do-it-yourselfer with all of the code requirements needed for a project, before the project starts. With that information, the project can be constructed to meet code compliance. When the codes are not followed or ignored, inspections fail. When an inspection fails to meet code compliance, revisions to the construction will probably be required, which can be time consuming and costly to the contractor, building owner, or both. Code compliance right from the beginning of a project can help avoid those costly changes. Safe buildings don’t just happen by themselves. The Building Codes are used by the Building Inspection Department as a tool, to aid in the construction of safe buildings. It is through a cooperative effort between the contractor or do-it-yourselfer, and the Building Inspection Department, that the buildings we use every day are constructed safely, and to code compliance. A good relationship between the builder, contractor or do-it-yourselfer and the local Building Inspection Department can aid in providing safe construction.

The month of June is designated as “Garage Door Safety Month”, by the International Door Association (IDA) and the Door & Access Systems Manufacturers Association (DASMA). Garage doors are one of the largest and heaviest moving parts of a home. Many of the moving parts on a garage door system are under very high tension. Signs of wear on cables, pulleys and springs are not always evident to most people, until it is too late. Garage door lift systems have safety sensors built into the system, to aid in providing a safe garage door system for the user. Failure of these safety systems and/or a garage door lift system can cause serious injury or even death when not operating correctly. Periodic inspection by qualified garage door professionals should be considered by homeowners as routine annual maintenance. Should you need inspection or repairs to your garage door system, Contact a trained and qualified garage door technician.

Code compliant construction and routine maintenance of the equipment in any building are vital to the safety of those occupying a building or structure. Sub-standard construction and lack of maintenance place human life at risk, a risk that is not worth taking. Should you have any questions regarding building code or code requirements, contact your local Building Inspection Department. They can, and should be, your best source of code information.