



The U.S. Government's Role in Standards and Conformity Assessment

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Government has an Interest

- In protecting health, safety and the environment
- In promoting fair trade and competition
- In having confidence
 - In performance and competently conducted activities
- In assuring interoperability – applicable to systems and components purchased
 - IT systems
 - Emergency communications systems
 - E-government
- In facilitating innovation



Key Premises

Standards should:

- Address health, safety and environmental aspects of products, processes and systems where relevant
- Support fair trade and fair competition
- Increase user, consumer, and government confidence
- Facilitate interoperability
- Stimulate innovation



Government Role in Standards

- User:
 - In product purchases
 - Through incorporation into regulations
- Participant in standards development through the voluntary process
- Contributor to the technical underpinning for standards
- Advocate for the U.S. national interest

Goal: protect health, safety and the environment while not creating unnecessary barriers to trade



Federal Agency Use of Voluntary Consensus Standards

- U.S. law and policy* require Federal agencies to:
 - use voluntary consensus standards to the extent practicable
 - report development of agency-unique standards
 - participate in the development of voluntary consensus standards relevant to their needs
- Encouraging the trend toward Federal agency reliance on nongovernment standards is an important part of the U.S. Standards Strategy

* Public Law 103-114 and OMB Circular A-119



Goals of the Government in Using Voluntary Consensus Standards

- Eliminate the cost to the Government of developing its own standards
- Decrease the cost of goods procured and burden of complying with agency regulations
- Promote efficiency and economic competition through harmonization of standards
- Further the policy of reliance on the private sector to supply Government needs for goods and services



Examples of How Agencies Use Standards

- Incorporation of private sector standards into regulation by specific reference
- General references to private sector standards in regulation
- Agency-developed standards
- Recognition of consensus standards in support of regulations



Extent of Federal Use of Standards

- In regulation
 - NIST has identified 9371 citations of standards incorporated by reference; more than 6500 are non-government standards
- In procurement
 - DOD, NASA and GSA maintain lists of standards suitable for use in procurement actions
 - DOD, the largest USG user of standards in procurement, lists more than 9500 voluntary standards in its procurement database (out of a total of more than 31,000)
- Despite duplication and overlap in lists, pattern of reliance on standards is clear



Major Sources of Standards Used by the Federal Government

- ASTM International
- American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME)
- Society of Automotive Engineers
- National Fire Protection Association (NFPA)
- Underwriters Laboratories, Inc.
- American Petroleum Institute
- ISO/IEC
- International Maritime Organization (IMO)
- Compressed Gas Association



US Government Agency Participation in Standards Development

- More than 4000 agency staff participate in private sector standards development activities (497 organizations)
- Government agencies seek out relevant voluntary standards development venues:
 - To support regulatory needs
 - To enable efficient procurement
 - To create solutions to support emerging national priorities



Advocating for U.S. Principles for Development and Implementation of Standards

- Encourage compatible governmental approaches to the use of standards as tools for meeting regulatory needs
- Encourage the use of standards that have global acceptance
- Promote key principles of standards development*: transparency, openness, impartiality and consensus, effectiveness and relevance, coherence (avoidance of duplication)

*Annex 4, Second Triennial Review of the TBT Agreement, November 2000



Conformity Assessment-Related Activities

- U.S. law requires NIST to coordinate Federal, State, and local standards activities and **conformity assessment activities** with private sector standards activities and **conformity assessment activities**
- With the goal of eliminating unnecessary duplication and complexity in the development and promulgation of conformity assessment requirements and measures.



Federal Agency Conformity Assessment Guidance Directs Agencies to...

- Use results of other agencies and private sector activities to maximum extent feasible
- Use relevant guides or standards for conformity assessment as appropriate
- Identify appropriate private sector practices and programs and reference as appropriate
- Participate in efforts to improve coordination among government and private sector activities
- Work with other agencies to avoid duplication and complexity
- Participate in development of consensus standards



National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP)

- A laboratory accreditation program administered by NIST
- Established in 1976
- Procedures set out in the U.S. Code of Federal Regulations (Part 285, Title 15)
- Based on ISO/IEC standards
- Signatory member to APLAC and ILAC
- Available to any qualifying laboratory



Conclusions

- Individual federal agencies make effective use of private sector standards and conformity assessment programs in many applications
- Agencies must consider whether the use of standards helps them accomplish their missions, increases efficiency, reduce the burden on regulated and other communities and whether there is an impact on trade
- Greater reliance on standards and conformity assessment approaches with global acceptance facilitates both least burdensome regulatory approaches and trade



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