

ANSI, National Consensus Standards & ASSE Participation as Secretariat

Council on Practices and Standards staff is often asked to explain the role ASSE plays in the development of standards through the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). This column examines how the organizations interact to produce standards used by SH&E professionals.

Organized in 1918, ANSI coordinates and administers the federated voluntary standardization system in the U.S. This system provides all segments of the economy with national consensus standards required for their operations and for protection of consumers and industrial workers. ANSI also represents the country in international standardization efforts through groups such as the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

ANSI is a federation of some 1,200 national trade, technical, professional, labor and consumer organizations, government agencies and individual companies. Thousands of individuals, companies, other organizations (e.g., labor, consumer, industrial, trade, technical and professional associations) contribute their knowledge, talent and effort to the standards-development process. ANSI coordinates the efforts of these groups and approves the standards they produce as American National Standards when its Board of Standards Review determines that a national consensus exists in their favor. Many of these and other national consensus standards have taken on additional importance since the passage of the OSH Act of 1970.

An American National Standard implies a consensus of those substantially concerned with its scope and provisions. Such a standard is intended to guide manufacturers, consumers and the general public. The mere existence of an American National Standard does not preclude anyone—whether they have approved the standard or not—from manufacturing, marketing, purchasing or using products, processes or procedures that do not conform to the standard.

These standards are subject to periodic review and may be revised or withdrawn at any time. ANSI procedures require that a standard be reaffirmed, revised or withdrawn no later than five years from its publication date. Users are cautioned to obtain the latest editions. SH&E professionals must also remember that ANSI does not develop standards and never provides an interpretation of one.

ASSE supports the voluntary development, promotion and use of consensus standards, and helps in all practical ways to develop and maintain such standards within the limits of its charter and resources. The Society is involved in standards activities with many organizations and committees functioning under the auspices of ANSI, National Fire Protection Assn. and ISO. Specifically, ASSE is secretariat for several committees functioning under ANSI procedures. Under ANSI procedures, a secretariat's major responsibilities are to:

- 1) Organize and/or maintain committees and oversee compliance with procedures.
- 2) Select a chair and vice-chair.
- 3) Apply for committee accreditation.
- 4) Maintain a current committee roster.
- 5) Ensure that meetings are conducted where all representatives have an opportunity to participate, and which are not closed to the affected public.
- 6) Propose programs of work and completion dates.
- 7) Provide a committee secretary.
- 8) Submit status reports to ANSI.
- 9) Follow ANSI procedures when letter ballots are taken and report results of successful ballots.
- 10) Submit proposed standards or revisions for approval as American National Standards.
- 11) Publish standards, revisions, errata and addenda.
- 12) Establish a procedure to hear appeals of actions/inactions of the American National Standards Committee.

It must be recognized that the secretariat does not write a standard. Rather, the secretariat facilitates the standards-development process to ensure the procedures instituted by ANSI are followed. E-mail questions regarding this process or ASSE's role to Tim Fisher at tfisher@asse.org.

Hotlinks

ANSI

American National Standards Institute
www.ansi.org

ASSE

American Society of Safety Engineers
www.asse.org

ASTM

ASTM International
www.astm.org

CEN

European Committee for Standardization
www.cenorm.be

ISO

International Organization for Standardization
www.iso.org

JCAHO

Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations
www.jcaho.org

NFPA

National Fire Protection Assn.
www.nfpa.org

NIST

National Institute of Standards and Technology
www.nist.gov

SCC

Standards Council of Canada
www.scc.ca

UL

Underwriters Laboratories Inc.
www.ul.com

ASSE & Standards

ASSE is secretariat for the following committees, developing the indicated standards:

Protection of Floor & Wall Openings, A1264

Safety Requirements for Workplace Floor and Wall Openings, Stairs and Railing Systems, ANSI A1264.1 - 1995

Standard for the Provision of Slip Resistance on Walking/Working Surfaces, A1264.2 - 2001

Eye & Face Protection, Z87

Practice for Occupational and Educational Eye and Face Protection, ANSI Z87.1 -1989 (R1998)

Confined Spaces, Z117

Safety Requirements for Confined Spaces, ANSI Z117.1 - 1995

Fall Protection, Z359

Safety Requirements for Personal Fall Arrest Systems, ANSI Z359.1 - 1992 (R1999)

Hydrogen Sulfide Safety Training, Z390

Accepted Practices for Hydrogen Sulfide Safety Training Programs, ANSI Z390.1 - 1995

Motor Vehicle Fleet Safety, Z15

Safety Requirements for Motor Vehicle Fleet Operations, ANSI Z15-200X

SH&E Training, Z490

Criteria for Best Practices in Safety, Health and Environmental Training, Z490.1 - 2001

Competence & Certification in the Safety Profession, Z590

Criteria for Establishing Levels of Competence in Certification in the Safety Profession, Z590.1 - (under development)