Standards Topics

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Standards Writing—An Ongoing Process

Standards documents are frequently referred to as "living documents," because they are constantly in the process of being reaffirmed, revised or obsoleted. It is prudent, therefore, to determine the current status of a document that may be in your files before you decide to use it. This is not an easy task, but your Society is about to make it easier.

In the very near future, AESF will be distributing "metal finishing" standards. The various pieces are being put into place, and we hope to be operational in short order. Look for more information in this column next month.

Standards Writing Groups

There are (the last time I counted) approximately 650 standards writing groups throughout the world. Of these, 118 are national standards bodies for individual countries. They also constitute the membership of the ISO (International Organization for Standardization).

The scope of ISO covers all fields except electrical and electronic engineering standards, which are the responsibility of the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC). Currently, ISO has 185 technical committees, 611 subcommittees and more than 2,000 working groups.

The ISO technical committees that have standards of interest to finishers are: ISO/TC 107, metallic and other inorganic coatings; ISO/TC/79/SC 2, anodized aluminum; ISO/TC 20, aircraft and space vehicles; ISO/TC 156, corrosion of metals; and ISO/TC 35, paints and varnishes.

U.S. Organizations

Within the United States, more than 425 standards writing organizations have been identified. The U.S., however, has no "official" standards writing group. Every technical society, business group and trade association is free to write the standards that satisfy its needs. These groups, including the U.S. government and its agencies, form what is known as the U.S. voluntary standards system. A majority of these groups is coordinated by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), which provides U.S. input to ISO and IEC.

It is estimated that more than 225,000 standards documents have been published by the various business associations, international standards bodies, municipalities, national governments, national standards bodies, regional standards bodies, technical societies, trade associations and voluntary standards organizations.

Within the metal finishing community there are approximately 650 standards documents covering metallic, inorganic and organic coatings and their testing, published by about a dozen or so organizations. The AESF efforts will be aimed at distributing these documents to our industry on a real-time basis. A cross-index of the finishing documents is also in preparation.

Copyright Considerations

The ISO standards documents are copyrighted and require a separate license to distribute in each country.

As of this writing, we are completing a license agreement with ANSI that will allow us to distribute ISO standards within the U.S.

We have begun talks with the Standards Council of Canada for the right to distribute to our Canadian members. Following this, we will begin discussions with the Standards Directorate of Mexico, Standards Australia, the Standards Institute of Argentina, and the Standards Association of Brazil. Licenses to distribute in other countries will be obtained as required by our membership.

Discussions are nearing completion to distribute the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) finishing standards on a worldwide basis. Similarly, discussions are underway with the Society of Automotive Engineers (SAE) to distribute SAE and AMS standards.

AESF will also distribute U.S. federal and military standards, specifications, handbooks, and qualified products list (QPL) documents that concern the finishing industry.

Licenses will also be obtained from the remaining document producers so that the AESF will provide a one-stop shopping center for all the finishing standards documents. *P&SF*