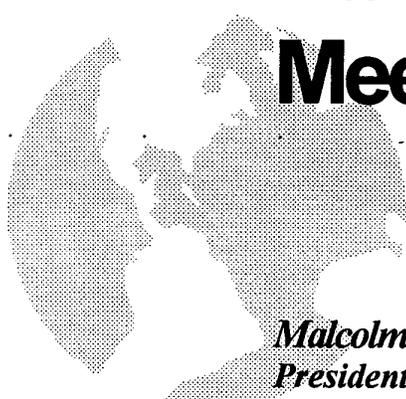


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The NEMA logo is rendered in a bold, black, sans-serif font. It is centered horizontally and partially overlaid by a thick, grey, textured horizontal bar that spans across the page. To the left of the logo, a vertical dotted line extends upwards from the top of the page.

Toward a National Standards Strategy to Meet Global Needs

A stylized, grey, textured graphic of a globe is positioned to the left of the author's name. It shows the continents in a light grey tone against a darker grey background.

Malcolm E. O'Hagan
President, National Electrical Manufacturers Association

September 23, 1998

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Toward a National Standards Strategy to Meet Global Needs

Introduction

Globalization and regionalization of markets have clearly changed the face of commerce. The European Union's internal market program, the NAFTA, FTAA, APEC and TABD agreements will significantly impact U.S. manufacturers and exporters, as well as consumers. These events necessitate the need for a more effective National Standards Strategy if we are to compete in a global market. Such a strategy must meet the needs of both private and public sectors, as well as the needs of the customer. The importance of standards-related trade issues is more obvious now since standards are having a growing impact on global commerce and can either facilitate or impede international trade. The implications are great for our economy. We must work together, the U.S. standards community under the umbrella of ANSI, in partnership with NIST and other government agencies, to develop an effective and sound U.S. policy to serve the needs of our industries.

The electrical industry includes products used primarily for the generation, transmission, distribution, control, and utilization of electrical energy. These products, by and large unregulated, are used in utility, industrial, commercial, and residential installations. Many of these products incorporate the spectrum of electrical and electronic technologies -- including a growing use of information technology and telecommunications technologies. The result is the use of technologies in the core electrical industry that overlap other industries. Because of this overlap, there must be an understanding and recognition of the needs and contribution of each sector in order to develop an effective National Standards Strategy. Through the years, electrical products built to standards that both have and continue to achieve international acceptance, have effectively served the US electrical infrastructure and maintained electrical safety.

NEMA believes that a truly "National" Standardization Strategy must include a conformity assessment dimension as well as a standards segment, since both are a part of the market access and globalization of trade. NEMA desires to work directly with NIST and ANSI in the development of a National Standardization Strategy that includes both essential elements.

Standards and Conformity Assessment

- The US should promote the concept that ISO and IEC standards be “inclusive” of practices and standards with broad multinational acceptance and should accommodate alternative solutions to meet international market needs.
- Standards harmonization must be pursued in a manner that reflects the principles of the WTO-TBT Agreement. Harmonization of existing standards does not always necessitate identical standards, but rather a set of mutually “equivalent and compatible” inclusive standards, with as few national differences as possible. The development of national differences, when necessary, must be transparent and those differences must be included in the standard document. Standards should be developed by the private sector, with the government participating in the standards development processes. The marketplace should choose the applicable product standards and the conformity assessment process.
- Voluntary private sector standards have provided safe and acceptable electrical products and this system must continue to be used in the US and encouraged throughout the world. Only when health, safety, or environmental standards and conformity assessment needs can not be met by the private sector should government regulations be considered.

Role of the American National Standards Institute

- The US Government should recognize ANSI as the umbrella organization for both domestic and international standards activities and the interface with IEC and ISO.
- ANSI should be a national standards-oriented organization made up of members from industry, trade associations, and government operating within the limits of constrained resources. This activity should function with government assistance as outlined below.
- ANSI should assure that its structure develops programs based on wide member input and that are responsive to the members needs. Programs that do not add value to the ANSI role as the US umbrella organization for standards should be discontinued.
- ANSI represents broad interests in the standards community. The ANSI structure and management must recognize that different industry sectors have different standards and conformity assessment requirements, and that what may be the best route for one industry sector could be detrimental if imposed on a different sector.
- ANSI must maintain a close liaison with the Federal Government and should relocate to the Washington DC area to facilitate this interface.

- ANSI should maintain a close liaison with regional standardization bodies and trade forums to keep ANSI members informed of developments and to promote US interests in their activities.
- ANSI should, where appropriate, support and promote the acceptance and use of American National Standards and North American practices where they meet local market needs.
 - ◆ For example, the US electrical safety system (installation codes, product standards and certification, and inspection/verification) is unsurpassed in providing a documented record of safety in response to local and national needs. This safety system and its benefits ought to be considered as a model for adaptation throughout the world. Accordingly, both NIST and ANSI should promote acceptance of the U.S. electrical safety system as a system which can be extensively utilized and adapted internationally.

Role of the US Government

The US Government should provide international and regional support and be an international advocate for this electrical industry strategy--supported by a cooperative working relationship and Government funding. The objective is international standards and conformity assessment schemes which effectively incorporate US interests through a coordinated strategy between industry and government—recognizing that the government role must not dictate or control the US voluntary participation in the international standardization process. An appropriate role for Government includes the following:

- Coordinate Department of Commerce resources such as NIST Standards Attaches assigned to Embassies around the world, U.S. Foreign Commercial Service, the ITA Advocacy Center and other Agencies.
- Understand the electrical industry standards and conformity assessment processes and respond appropriately to foreign government challenges to the standards system.
- Develop WEB SITES through NIST for Global Internet standardization communications and information exchanges.
- Continue joint training and promotion initiatives
- Participate actively on technical committees of standards developing organizations
- Work with industry to provide funding for standards activities which support the infrastructure for U.S. participation in the international standards arena.

NEMA looks forward to continued participation in the development of a National Standards strategy.