



Shaping Tomorrow's
Built Environment Today

CONSENSUS STANDARDS: EXPERT SOLUTIONS TO MEET GLOBAL NEEDS

THE ISSUE

Voluntary consensus technical standards developed by private organizations are essential for a productive global economy and to facilitate global commerce. Standards foster safe building technology innovation by providing a transparent baseline and needed metrics for assessing how that technology can impact building design, performance, and the occupants. They are necessary for comparing technologies in the expanding global marketplace and facilitating cross-border collaboration. Governments and model code bodies recognize the value of voluntary consensus standards and adopt them for use in their building codes and regulations.

Voluntary consensus technical standards are developed through the participation of qualified, interested, and affected stakeholders including manufacturers, consumers, users, advocacy organizations, and representatives of government and academia. Standards accreditors such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC) follow several principles such as consensus, balance, transparency, due process, and technical expertise.

Copyright protection of voluntary consensus technical standards is critical to the continued development and maintenance of standards. Governments at all levels benefit from application of standards by private organizations who rely on copyright protection in order to continue the maintenance of existing standards and development of future standards. Without copyright protection, standards development organizations will be challenged to provide the public with the benefit of rigorous research, tested and science-backed standards.

In the United States, policymakers have considered voluntary consensus standards so critical that federal law (the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995), supplemented by OMB Circular A-119, directs federal agencies to use voluntary consensus standards wherever possible in their procurement and regulatory activities in lieu of expending public resources developing government-unique standards. Current policy recognizes that reliance on voluntary consensus standards protects public health and safety, saves taxpayers money, encourages long-term growth for U.S. businesses, and promotes the global competitiveness of American enterprises.

ASHRAE's ROLE

ASHRAE develops and publishes robust technical standards; many of which are adopted directly by governments or into building codes. ASHRAE standards establish requirements in the areas of heating and cooling, indoor air quality, energy conservation and management, building water systems, high-performance buildings, safe refrigerant use, and others. ASHRAE's standard development process is rigorous, and it is one of only six standards-developing organizations in the U.S. that can self-certify that its standards have followed ANSI's procedures.

ASHRAE also serves on U.S. Technical Advisory Groups (TAGS) for ISO Committees and in the role of international secretariat for ISO Technical Committees to help ensure that ASHRAE views are represented. These standards are supported by technical committees that develop publications and educational materials to assist in the application of ASHRAE standards. ASHRAE standards are developed by experts from around the globe under strict ethical and non-commercialism guidelines.

ASHRAE's VIEW

Use of voluntary consensus standards at all levels of government are a benefit to society. For this reason:

- Government entities should continue to support voluntary consensus standard development, use, and adoption in laws and regulations, which can protect public health and safety, improve commerce, and save taxpayers money.
- Agencies should work with standards developers and industry experts to identify situations where societal interests could be addressed through the use of voluntary consensus standards.
- Governments should continue to foster and support the unique character and strengths of the public-private partnership in standards development as they pursue trade and other international agreements, regulatory harmonization, and legislative and regulatory approaches.
- Governments should support policies, both domestically and internationally, which ensure the continued ownership and control of the copyrights and trademarks of standards developers.
- Policy makers should participate in the development of voluntary consensus standards and government officials should encourage their staff who are subject matter experts to participate through work release time and reimbursement of expenses incurred.
- Governments need to regularly update regulations and policies to reference the latest versions of standards to reflect the latest technical advances, which can help protect public health, improve resiliency and sustainability.