

COVER LETTER REGARDING THE VOLUNTARY AGREEMENT FOR THE MUTUAL ACCEPTANCE OF TEST DATA

Dear ACB:

The objective of this letter is to provide for reference to ANSI-Accredited Certification Bodies (ACBs) and all interested parties the attached version (December 1st, 2008) of the "Voluntary Agreement for the Mutual Acceptance of Test Data."

BACKGROUND

ANSI operates product certification accreditation programs in conformance with the provisions of ISO/IEC 17011 – *Conformity assessment – General requirements for accreditation bodies accrediting conformity assessment bodies*. This International Standard establishes the general requirements for assessment and accreditation of certification / registration bodies.

The objective of this neutral, third-party accreditation process is to provide certification bodies with an international recognition of its competence to operate a product certification program. The ANSI accreditation program utilizes and operates in accordance with ISO/IEC Guide 65 – *General requirements for bodies operating product certification systems* as well as additional ANSI requirements.

The ANSI Accreditation Committee for Product Certifiers is responsible for implementing the operational aspects of ANSI's product certification accreditation programs and related activities including:

- formulating policy matters relating to the operation of the ANSI Product Certification Accreditation Program;
- reviewing the process of evaluation and rendering decisions on accreditation;
- responsibility for all decisions relating to the granting, maintaining, extending, suspending, reducing, and withdrawing of accreditation;
- supervising the implementation of Accreditation Program policies;
- delegating authority to organizations, committees or individuals, as required, to undertake defined operational activities on its behalf; and
- preparing procedures and criteria for assessment.

While manufacturers recognize the value of third-party certification, it is apparent that they view with increasing concern the costs incurred from the proliferation of new certification programs, requirements, and what is perceived as ensuing redundant testing and certification activities. To address this issue, the ACC began a multi-perspective review in an effort to increase the acceptance of test data by the ANSI-accredited certification bodies.

Following completion of an ANSI survey to solicit product certification body interest in mutual acceptance of test data, the ACC developed a template agreement for interested certification bodies. Key issues to be addressed were:

- (1) type of labs used by ACBs;
- (2) evaluation of the degree of ACB compliance with ISO/IEC 17025 requirements;
- (3) methodology upon which ACBs assess labs;
- (4) mutual indemnification and minimal liability insurance for participants; and
- (5) need to define a level of minimal requirements for parties related to the mutual acceptance of test data vis-à-vis ISO/IEC Guide 65, ISO/IEC 17020, and ISO/IEC 17025 requirements.

The primary objective of this "Voluntary Agreement for the Mutual Acceptance of Test Data" is to encourage those ANSI-Accredited Certification Bodies who wish to participate in an Agreement to endeavor to reduce requirements for redundant testing and as well, economize on costs, maximize efficiency, and avoid duplication associated with the third-party certification process.

We hope that you will find this Agreement of use in the future.

Sincerely,

ANSI Accreditation Committee

Attachment – Voluntary Agreement for the Mutual Acceptance of Test Data