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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR PRODUCT CERTIFICATION AGENCIES

AC370

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PREFACE

The attached accreditation criteria has been issued to provide all interested parties with guidelines on implementing performance features of the applicable standards referenced in the accreditation criteria. The criteria was developed and adopted following public hearings conducted by the International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), Accreditation Committee and is effective on the date shown above. All accreditations issued or reissued on or after the effective date must comply with criteria. If the criteria is an updated version from a previous edition, solid vertical lines (|) in the outer margin within the criteria indicate a technical change or addition from the previous edition. Deletion indicators (→) are provided in the outer margins where a paragraph or item has been deleted if the deletion resulted from a technical change. This criteria may be further revised as the need dictates.

IAS may consider alternate criteria provided the proponent submits substantiating data demonstrating that the alternate criteria are at least equivalent to the attached criteria and otherwise meet applicable accreditation requirements.

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ACCREDITATION CRITERIA FOR PRODUCT CERTIFICATION AGENCIES

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Scope: This criteria sets forth the requirements for obtaining and maintaining International Accreditation Service, Inc. (IAS), certification agency ("agency") accreditation and for the qualifying data that must be submitted relating to the scope of certification for which accreditation is sought. This criteria supplements the IAS Rules of Procedure for Certification Agency Accreditation.

1.2 Reference Documents:

1.2.1 ISO/IEC (International Organization for Standardization/International/Electrotechnical Commission) Guide 65:1996, General Requirements for Bodies Operating Product Certification Systems.

1.2.2 IAS Rules of Procedure for Product Certification Agency Accreditation.

1.2.3 ISO/IEC Standard 17020: 1998, General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection.

1.2.4 ANS/ISO/IEC Standard 17025: 2005, General Requirements for the Competence of Testing and Calibration Laboratories.

1.2.5 International Accreditation Forum (IAF) Guidance on the Application of ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996, Issue 2.

2.0 BASIC INFORMATION

The following basic information is necessary:

2.1 Data showing compliance with the IAS Rules of Procedure for Product Certification Agency Accreditation.

2.2 Data showing compliance with ISO/IEC Guide 65:1996, General Requirements for Bodies Operating Product Certification Systems.

3.0 SUPPLEMENTAL REQUIREMENTS

3.1 The certification agency must have requirements that every manufacturing or assembly plant producing certified products be visited to perform surveillance activities for certified products at least once a year.

3.2 Eligibility is limited to third-party product certification bodies that (1) operate testing laboratories and inspection agencies, or (2) have affiliation with a testing laboratory and/or inspection agency that is a wholly owned subsidiary of a larger organization that includes the certification body. Testing laboratories and inspection agencies must be accredited by International Accreditation Service (IAS), or by another signatory to the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) or the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) Mutual Recognition Arrangement.

4.0 ASSESSMENT

4.1 Prior to accreditation, certification agencies shall be subject to an on-site assessment by IAS. This assessment is to determine compliance with this criteria (AC370), including evaluation of expertise in the area(s) of certification where accreditation is sought.

4.2 After the initial year of accreditation, certification agencies are subject to an on-site surveillance assessment. The surveillance assessment shall include review of at least the following: internal audit reports, minutes of management review meetings, any changes in key personnel or facilities, and information on any other significant changes in the management system of the certification agency.

4.3 IAS will conduct an on-site reassessment of accredited certification agencies at a minimum of once every two years, for verification of continued compliance with IAS accreditation requirements.

5.0 WITNESSING INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

IAS will periodically witness actual on-site inspections by each certification agency. The minimum amount of technical witnessing per certification body is:

5.1 One activity in each major category of certification prior to the granting of accreditation and then annually thereafter.

5.2 One activity relating to each subcategory within the major categories of the certification body's scope of accreditation, at least every four years.

5.3 If the certification agency has clients with certified plants located overseas, IAS will perform witness inspection activities of overseas plants based on the number of products and plants the certification agency has certified.

6.0 WITNESS TESTING

All witness testing activities conducted at a manufacturer's facility must be witnessed by technically competent certification agency staff that are trained not only in the test being witnessed, but in the appropriate sections of ANS/ISO/IEC Standard 17025. Appropriate measures must be taken for long-term testing, where constant witnessing is not feasible, to ensure tampering of the sample or testing equipment does not take place.

7.0 USE OF MANUFACTURER'S DATA

If a certification agency plans to use data generated and submitted by a manufacturer that is not part of witness testing, the certification agency must have a program in place to ensure validity of the data. The certification agency shall consider the following possible elements for such a program and shall have justification for those it chooses not to utilize: auditing the manufacturer to appropriate elements of ANS/ISO/IEC Standard 17025; performing random duplicate analyses; having the manufacturer participate in proficiency testing programs, where available; technical review of the raw data rather than acceptance of just a number or result; limiting testing to only those client's analysts who have been approved by the certification agency to perform the testing; outside accreditation of the manufacturer's laboratory; random unannounced visits to the manufacturer's laboratory during product testing; and review of in-plant quality assurance/quality control results. ■