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IAS POLICY ON MOBILE AND ON-SITE CALIBRATION LABORATORIES

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DEFINITIONS

MOBILE LABORATORY: An operation that is independent of an established calibration laboratory facility. A mobile laboratory may operate from an office space, home, or vehicle, or may use a virtual office.

ON-SITE LABORATORY: An operation that is based in and/or directly supported by an established calibration laboratory facility, but that actually performs calibration actions at customer locations. An on-site laboratory might be, for example, a climate-controlled mobile facility, such as a converted motor home.

For purpose of this document, an on-site operation might also include contract staffing of a customer calibration laboratory facility.

CONTRACT STAFFING: Calibration laboratory employees assigned to a customer location and/or customer calibration facilities under a contract arrangement.

POLICY

Management of mobile and on-site operations is more challenging than management of an established laboratory facility. However, the same requirements apply for IAS accreditation.

Both mobile operations and on-site operations are considered laboratories by IAS and, for accreditation, must meet the requirements of ANS/ISO/IEC Standard 17025:2005. For accreditation, each mobile or on-site laboratory must be assessed to determine its competence.

A mobile operation must be an entity that can be held legally responsible. If the mobile operation is an independent organization (e.g., a separate company), the mobile operation must meet all applicable legal criteria and must have an established point of contact and a valid address.

Mobile operations that are a part of a parent organization (e.g., a home-based operation in one state that has a parent organization in another state) must meet all applicable legal criteria and provide an established point of contact for each mobile operation. Mobile operations do not

necessarily require a separate accreditation provided the established laboratory controls all support and operations. For example, the established laboratory maintains contract review, assigns the work, maintains the measurement standards, reviews the calibration results, and issues the calibration certificates.

On-site operations will use as the contact point the established laboratory that supports the on-site operations. The established laboratory facility has the responsibility to meet all legal criteria and to provide a point of contact.

Customer facilities that are staffed on a contract basis by the calibration organization may use the customer facility as the contact point. However, the calibration laboratory has responsibility for meeting legal criteria.

Common management functions may be consolidated and managed at a central location (e.g. corporate headquarters or at an established calibration laboratory) for both mobile and on-site operations. Examples of common management functions would be data and document management, training, purchasing, and contract review.

Mobile and on-site calibration laboratories must define, implement, and maintain a quality system that addresses the requirements of ANS/ISO/IEC Standard 17025:2005.

Mobile and on-site operations must address and describe precautions for confidentiality, and for document and data security and access, taking into consideration the inherently less secure environment encountered away from an established laboratory. Special precautions must be taken for electronic transmission of calibration results, whether by e-mail, fax or transferable medium such as CD or diskette.

Both mobile and on-site laboratories must address and describe procedures and/or methods to be employed for control of nonconforming calibration, and for dealing with customer complaints. Procedures must reference corrective action.

Both mobile and on-site operations must address and describe steps employed to ensure proper transport and handling of equipment used to perform calibration, and of customer items received for calibration. Precautions must be appropriate for the equipment being transported, and for the method of transport used.

Both mobile and on-site operations must address environmental conditions, given the inherent lack of control over such conditions that may be experienced at customer locations. Precautions employed to prevent adverse effects to the quality of the measurement, caused by environmental circumstances, must be described.

Estimation of uncertainty of measurement must take into account the typical conditions encountered at customer locations. If all on-site and/or mobile calibrations are performed in climate-controlled conditions, the estimation will likely be very close to that for the established laboratory. However, if the conditions are subject to significant variation, then the uncertainty of measurement calculations may be considerably different from those of an established laboratory.