



## MILSpec Conversion— The ASTM Way

**If your committee is asked to convert a military standard or specification to an ASTM standard, staff is here to help in the conversion process.**

IN THE WAKE OF VARIOUS FEDERAL GOVERNMENT initiatives, including the passage of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 and former Defense Secretary William Perry's MILSpec Reform program (see sidebar), many military standards have been converted to private sector standards. Many of those have been ASTM standards. Your committee may be among the many that has been or will be asked to convert one of these soon-to-be-cancelled military documents. Here's how the process unfolds.

### THE CONVERSION PROCESS

A major benefit of the conversion activity in ASTM is that technical review is provided through our rigorous and proven standards development process. It is through this process that the document is often revised to ensure it is market relevant and technically up to date before it is published.

The conversion of a military standard in ASTM is typically initiated through communication between DoD personnel or government contractor and ASTM staff and technical committee. If the request is initiated by DoD personnel, it is then the responsibility of ASTM staff to coordinate and manage the conversion effort by identifying the appropriate committee and subcommittee, providing the members with a copy of the military document, recruiting stakeholder participation, educating new members on ASTM policies and regulations, and overseeing the document

through the balloting process. Some technical committees have assigned a governmental affairs subcommittee or task group specifically to manage and monitor the conversion of military standards; this is especially true for those committees that have a high volume of conversion activity.

### A PROACTIVE APPROACH

ASTM staff, in an effort to better facilitate the conversion effort, proactively seeks adoption of existing ASTM standards in cases where the ASTM standard could replace a military document or fill a void in procurement. The most critical piece in the adoption process is a determination of what agency and individual point of contact in the DoD is responsible for adopting standards related to a particular area of interest. DoD standardization management responsibilities are divided along product and technology lines. The product lines are organized into logical families known as Federal Supply Groups such as FSG 31 on Bearings, and then subdivided into Federal Supply Classes such as FSC 3130 on Mounted Bearings. At the same time, technologies such as soldering, data communication, and configuration management are organized into standardization areas. Lead Standardization Activities such as the Defense Supply Center, Richmond, are typically assigned management responsibilities of multiple Federal Supply Classes and/or standardization areas. Part of the relevant management responsibilities include adopting non-government standards as replacements for military standards and specifications.

The DoD management plans that have been developed for each ASTM committee (see sidebar, "A Two-Way Street") incorporate two varieties of the ASTM standards—those already adopted and those standards that have potential interest to the DoD, but have not yet been adopted. The plan further tracks a list of thousands of military standards and specifications collected by the Defense Standardization Program Division for non-government replacement. By using such tools as the *Standardization*

# ToolBox

## Your Staff Manager:

DoD personnel or government contractors usually initiate MILSpec conversion through ASTM staff. Your staff manager coordinates the conversion by:

- 1) Identifying the appropriate committee and sub-committee;
- 2) Providing the members with a copy of the military document;

- 3) Recruiting stakeholder participation;
- 4) Educating new members on ASTM policies and regulations; and
- 5) Overseeing the document through the balloting process.

## Your Peers:

Many on your technical committee have been through this process. Network at meetings or ask your staff manager who to contact.

*Directory and the Department of Defense Index of Specifications and Standards (DoDISS), we are able to determine if an ASTM standard has already been adopted by the DoD. ASTM is also able to locate which agency and point of contact is managing the adoption of standards in a particular Federal Supply Class. The Standardization Directory is a listing of Federal Supply Groups and Classes, Standardization Areas, Lead Standardization Activities, and civilian agency standardization offices including addresses and points of contact. The DoDISS is a listing of all military standards and specifications and all nongovernment standards that are*

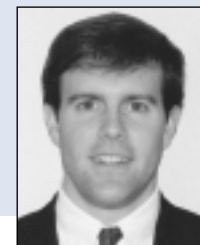
DoD adopted. These tools enable ASTM to determine if there may be standards currently in the DoD that could be replaced by existing ASTM standards or that may be converted to reflect commercial practices.

## THE FUTURE?

The conversion of military standards is by no means over. According to Steve Lowell, program analyst in the Standardization Program Division of the Office of the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Production and Logistics, "nongovernment standards are viewed as one of the cornerstones of military-commercial integration efforts." As long as a key goal of the De-

partment of Defense is to reduce acquisition costs by modeling commercial buying practices, the DoD will rely more and more heavily on standards developing organizations and the voluntary standards they produce. ASTM will be there to meet that need.

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## THE CONCEPT IS BORN

Over 35 years ago, the Department of Defense (DoD) realized the benefits of adopting and participating in the development of non-government voluntary standards. The DoD partnered with standards development organizations like ASTM to increase productivity and efficiency, improve health and safety, conserve resources, and eliminate administrative burdens. This relationship has enabled the DoD to establish consensus standards to satisfy their acquisition requirements. The result has been millions of dollars of savings to the DoD and the American public through the conversion of thousands of military standards and specifications into voluntary standards.

From the beginning, DoD policies and procedures have set the pace for interaction between federal agencies and standards developing organizations. DoD laid the foundation for the issuance of the first federal-wide

policy in 1982, Office of Management and Budget (OMB) Circular A-119, "Federal Participation in the Development and Use of Voluntary Standards," which encourages federal agencies to partici-

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pate in the development, adoption and use of voluntary standards. Passage of Public Law 104-113, the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995, has taken the issue one step further by requiring federal agencies to document and rationalize failures to use non-government voluntary standards. Never before has the support been so apparent for government agencies to participate in voluntary standards organizations and adopt and use the consensus standards they help to produce.

## A TWO-WAY STREET

In June 1994, Secretary of Defense William Perry initiated a program that would have significant impact on the participation, adoption and use of voluntary standards by the DoD. The program entitled MILSpec Reform, was designed to review, on a document-by-document basis, over 30,000 military standards and specifications. According to Greg Saunders, director of the Defense Standardization Program Office, the review had several purposes:

- Eliminate documents the department no longer needed;
- Change documents that were still needed to reflect commercial products and practices;
- Convert military-unique requirements to performance terms; and
- Move documents that already reflected commercial practices into the voluntary standards community whenever possible.

In the midst of this initiative by the DoD, ASTM entered the picture. We implemented an internal initiative aimed at ensuring full utilization of ASTM resources in the MILSpec conversion effort. This was accomplished through training staff on DoD policies and procedures and increasing the commitment of the ASTM membership to MILSpec reform.

Our initiative has resulted in the development of individual management plans for each ASTM Technical Committee and a comprehensive database that tracks all MILSpec conversion activity. The coordinated effort within ASTM has led to the conversion of hundreds of military standards and specifications and currently the DoD has adopted approximately 2,800 ASTM standards.

DoD has streamlined the process of adopting revisions as well by implementing a policy that once a standard is adopted, DoD will use and reference the most current version.