
So You Are Now a Member of the ASTM Committee B05. Now What?

Imagine this scenario. You are sitting at your desk planning the next move in your fantasy football league. Suddenly, your boss comes in and tells you that the current ASTM representative has retired and you are now the ASTM representative for the entire corporation. You feel the panic rising. You do not even know what ASTM stands for much less how to be the representative. What is a person to do? Never fear. This simple overview has been prepared with you in mind. Though written specifically for the Committee B05, the discussion below is applicable to most ASTM committees.

What is the ASTM? The ASTM, International is an organization headquartered in West Conshohocken, PA that develops consensus standards for many different types of industries. These standards are recognized worldwide.

What does B05 do specifically? B05 is charged with creating and maintaining standards for all things copper. The Main Committee is composed of different subcommittees with responsibility for different areas including Castings, Flat Products, Methods of Test, Terminology, etc.

When does B05 meet? B05 typically meets twice per year in April and in October. The meeting cities vary and are located around the country and even in Canada, eh?

Who is on the B05? As with all ASTM committees, B05 (both main and subcommittee) is composed of producers, users, consumers and general interest parties. There can be any number of members but only certain members have “voting privileges”. The exact ratio of the three factions is controlled to provide equal representation and to ensure that all voices are heard. A committee with the correct ratio is said to be in balance. All committees must have balance and it is the committee chair’s responsibility to ensure the balance. For each committee, there is at least a chairman and secretary.

How are standards created? A standard is generally created at the request of an individual or corporation. The Main Committee chairperson will assign the request to the appropriate subcommittee who, in turn, will decide whether or not to pursue the development. If it is decided to pursue the standard, the subcommittee chair will appoint a task group chairperson to oversee the development. All interested parties are welcome to join the task group and work on the development of the standard. The standard must be placed into a particular format called the Outline of Form and Style.

Is the task group the final authority? No. Once the task group has completed their work including submission to the Editorial Subcommittee, the task group chairperson will request the proposed specification be voted upon or “be moved to ballot”. There are three (3) voting steps which must be followed:

1. The subcommittee must vote to allow the standard to be moved to ballot. It should be noted that a subcommittee chair can allow the proposed standard to be moved to subcommittee ballot without the approval of the subcommittee though it is not the norm.

2. Once the proposed standard has been approved to “move to ballot”, the ASTM home office will submit the proposed standard to all who are on that committee. Each person has a chance to vote for, against or abstain. If a vote is cast against the item, it is called a “negative”. The negatives must be accompanied by a technical reason. (Economic reasons alone are not justifications to vote negative.) Once the negative is received, it is up to the task group chairperson to try to resolve the negative with the voter. If the negative cannot be resolved, then subcommittee will vote at its next meeting whether to uphold the negative or “find it persuasive”. Only the voting members of the subcommittee can vote to find the negative persuasive. If the majority votes the negative to be non-persuasive, then the ballot moves to the Main Committee. If the negative is found to be persuasive, the proposed standard is sent back to the task group or it can be abandoned.

3. Once approved to the Main Committee, the proposed standard will go through a similar process except this time, all of the members of B05 can vote on it. Concurrently, the proposed standard is also voted on by the Society (all of ASTM). Again, all negatives must be resolved before the standard is passed.

What happens next? Once the proposed standard has been passed by the subcommittee, the Main Committee, and the entire Society, it’s designation changes from a “proposed standard” to a “standard”. ASTM will validate the submittal and publish it in the next volume. Typically, the whole process takes a minimum of 18 months from initiation to publication.

Is B05’s work complete at that point? B05’s work is never done. Under the guidance of our fearless Chairman, the committee is charged with reviewing each standard every five (5) years. The standard, after it is published, is assigned a “shepherd” who is responsible for the review. The review and renewal must be voted on in exactly the same manner as a new standard

So, with your new knowledge, you are now ready to be a full and active member of the B05. We look forward to seeing you and do not forget to tell your boss that you need a raise for all the extra effort.
