



**Every two months, SGS Baseefa Technical Manager Ron Sinclair MBE gives his perspective on the latest developments in the world of standards.**

**We will have just got fully comfortable with doing everything remotely when (hopefully) we are suddenly released and can actually meet face-to-face. But how well has remote working actually served us?**

IECEx were very quick out of the blocks last year, with Operational Document OD 060, which outlined how IECEx could continue to operate in the face of an international emergency which, by necessity, curtailed all the visits of assessors and auditors to certification bodies and to their clients. Some things have continued to be postponed, but, in the main, OD 060 has served the industry well and has enabled IECEx to continue to function, without any drop-off in the quality of the work.

Industries creating hazardous areas have, by and large, continued to operate; manufacturers have continued to design new Ex products and still require certification.

The IECEx Executive met remotely at the end of March. Once again, those in Australia kept going into the early hours of the following day and the Americans had to get up early, while those of us in Europe met during "normal office hours". Because all participants have met each other face to face on numerous occasions, that sort of meeting always goes well. What did give us concern however, was where an IECEx assessor or auditor was officiating remotely with a company that they had not previously visited. The consensus was that for documentation reviews, it could

# Peripheral vision

work well, but an assessment of a testing laboratory, while possible, was not so easy.

This is where an active peripheral vision comes into its own. It is not what a remotely held smart-phone or laptop camera shows you that is necessarily the most important. A good assessor is always looking around to spot things that can provoke a question. "Why is that DMM on the next bench apparently available for use, whilst its calibration label shows it should have been calibrated six months ago?" And sometimes the questions can be even more embarrassing!

With vaccination roll-out showing us a glimmer of light at the end of the pandemic tunnel, the question was raised; having gained experience with remote assessments, could, or should, we continue with some remote assessments once we have established a "new normal" and DS 060 is no longer in operation? The jury is still out on this question. Clearly there are financial cost savings to be made, but this has to be balanced with the more subjective costs of doing assessments without the benefit of peripheral vision, and without the benefit of personal engagement brought about during a conventional assessment.

The current working assumption is that DS 060 will remain in operation until the end of this calendar year (to be confirmed by the IECEx Executive in 2021 Q4), and that a full discussion will take place during the early September meeting of the IECEx Management Committee, where all stakeholders will have the opportunity to make an input. It is possible that, in future, some intermediate assessments may take place remotely, but almost certain that initial assessments and major re-assessments will be face to face. We must wait for the Management Committee to decide.

Two other topics of general interest:

As hinted at by Thorsten Arnhold in his article last month, IECEx is becoming



**The new IECEx logo**

aware of the rapid development of interest in hydrogen as an intermediary for energy storage. Thorsten made an interesting presentation about the current views in Germany and IECEx will be investigating how to take this forward, using combinations of both IEC and ISO standards for certification in this field.

The IECEx logo and Certification Mark have changed. Full details, including how it is to be used as the Certification Mark, are in the February 2021 edition of IECEx 04, which can be downloaded from [www.iecex.com](http://www.iecex.com). Put simply, both the new logo and the new certification mark are directly equivalent to the left-hand square of the previous logo. The new rules will make life simpler for the many manufacturers who had considered placing the Mark on their products but were put off by the previous complicated rules. Although the logo has also changed, the rules for its use have not. ■

## About the author

SGS Baseefa's Technical Manager Ron Sinclair MBE will continue to attend the European Notified Bodies Group for ATEX (ExNBG), although representing SGS Fimko, their partner EU Notified Body, now that the UK bodies are excluded. He is Chair of the IECEx Service Facility Certification Committee and a member of the IECEx Executive. He is chair of the UK Standards Committee operating in this area for electrical equipment, and recently retired as chair of the European committee.