



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

Face-to-face, hybrid or remote

BSI and IEC seem to be placing a different emphasis on the advantages of those writing standards actually meeting face-to-face. During the pandemic, we all got used to remote working. Whichever conference app was used, business carried on, and standards continued to be developed.

BSI has declared that due to its advantages, “remote” is the favoured way of working, with committees having to justify a face-to-face meeting, if they consider it essential. Indeed, we do seem to be having more frequent, albeit shorter meetings, allowing small working groups to prepare material between full committee meetings.

However, it cannot be denied that there are advantages in being face-to-face. Not only better to interpret what is being said, but also to take advantage of the breaks in the main meeting to hold side meetings and work out knotty problems.

Hybrid provides either the best of both worlds, or the worst of both worlds, according to the level of discipline imposed on the participants, both in the room and online, and how well participants know each other from previous face-to-face meetings.

IEC TC31 completed a two-week series of meetings in Sydney, Australia, at the end of March. The meetings showed that hydrogen continues to be a major talking point in both the standards bodies and the IECEx certification system. As IECEx gears

up for the certification of the necessary hardware, IEC TC31 is liaising with ISO TC197 “Hydrogen Technologies”. The remit of TC197 goes beyond the scope of TC31, dealing with the detail of hydrogen dispensers, and distribution networks, etc., but it is important that the committees liaise with each other, to ensure that the new standards being written in TC197 are firmly based in the work of TC31.

Most of the work of WG 22 was continuation of the review and resolution of the comments received on the CD of the proposed 8th edition of IEC 60079-0. The CD was circulated over a year ago, but the review of the comments received from national committees was not completed in the two days allocated, so will be completed later in the year at the next series of meetings in New York State. Those not involved in the process would be both surprised and impressed with the care devoted to each comment. It can easily take between three and five years from the first proposed draft for a new edition of a standard until it is published. International standards take longer than domestic standards, simply through the need to get the meetings organised.

The maintenance team (MT) for 60079-11 was taking a rest, having successfully achieved publication of the 7th edition in January this year, after several series of meetings. However, they gave notice that they are already collecting a number of questions from users of the new standard, that will possibly lead to the publication of either a series of Interpretation Sheets, or an amendment (that would be issue 7.1) within the next year. If you are struggling with interpreting the standard, it is recommended that you approach your national standards body and request that they enter a query on your behalf.

In Europe, we have had Basic Safety Publications (BSP) in our area for many

years, EN 1127-1 for Group II and EN 1127-2 for group I. IEC TC31 took the decision a few years ago that having a similar document at IEC level would prevent some of the clashes that have occurred between the experts in TC31 and the wishes of experts in committees that have only a peripheral interest in the subject. It is hoped that a first draft of the BSP will be available later this year, and will cover an overview of most of the standards in the 60079 series and 80079 series.

One of the significant changes for the next edition of ISO/IEC 80079-34 (the Ex quality systems standard) will be preparing specific recommendations on which parts of the standard need to be applied to the various types of organisation involved in the manufacture of equipment. This will specifically interface with the defined terms used by IECEx; that is “manufacturer”, “manufacturing location”, “production site”, “local assembler” and “trade agent”. The present edition covers all these activities, but some do not need all of the standard. This should ensure that all certification bodies work in the same way. It is a demonstration of how the standard writers work with the standard users to ensure a sensible outcome. ■

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, as well as attending the equivalent UK Approved Bodies Group in the UK. He has recently retired as Chair of the IECEx Service Facility Certification Committee and as 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.