



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

# Intrinsic Safety moves forward

**It is good to be able to give the news that a standard which has been a long time in discussion is about to be published. On December 2, IEC released the results of the FDIS (Final Draft International Standard) voting for the 7th Edition of IEC 60079-11.**

The MT (Maintenance Team) had worked hard in task groups over the Covid period, in addition to holding full MT meetings, to resolve the 1000+ comments on the CDV document. The FDIS passed with no votes against. However, there were still about 100 comments on the FDIS, and these will be dealt with by incorporating, where appropriate, the purely editorial comments, but noting technical comments as an input for discussion at the start of the next edition.

The reorganisation of the standard, along with significant technical changes, has resulted in the section of the IEC Foreword, listing principal changes from the previous edition, extending to 10 pages. Most revised standards require only two or three pages. There are 13 Category “A” changes that are considered to be minor or editorial, that don’t alter compliance requirements between the editions, and 74 Category “B” changes that can be regarded as extensions of the standard, allowing new forms of construction, or relaxation of the requirement. However, there are 31 Category “C” changes, each representing some change that may cause a product compliant with the previous edition not to be compliant with the new edition.

As an added problem, the European Commission has reduced the permitted overlap, during which both the previous and the new edition are accepted as harmonised, from 3 years to 18 months. No doubt there will be a flurry of activity in updating certificates from the 6th edition to the 7th edition, to meet the deadline.

Since many manufacturers now have both ATEX and UKEX certificates for their products, this will mean double the number of re-issued certificates, even if the changes in both certificates are covered by the same technical report. For IECEx, there will not be the same pressure, as IECEx accepts certification to both the current and immediately previous edition of a standard. But it usually makes sense to have all three forms of certificate updated at the same time, minimising any potential duplication of work.

While writing this, I don’t have an actual publication date for the IEC version of the standard, but I assume it is likely to be during the first quarter of 2023. The Cenelec version should follow soon after, but this will depend on the state of play with the HAS consultants, responsible for signing it off for harmonisation on behalf of the European Commission. I understand the major hiatus in the earlier part of 2022, relating to the contracts for the consultants, has been resolved, and that standards are starting to appear. However, I don’t know where EN IEC 60079-11:2023 will be in the queue. My advice is not to wait for the Cenelec version. Technically, it will be identical to the IEC version, and the introduction to the Essential Health and Safety Requirements of the directive says that new technological knowledge should be employed as soon as possible.

Although not of so much importance in terms of changes, those responsible for

installing Intrinsically Safe Systems should be aware that the new edition of EN IEC 60079-25 was published in December (two years after the IEC version). There are a few changes, as well as shuffling some requirements between 60079-25 and 60079-14. Part 14 covers the installation of simpler systems, but Part 25 is needed for those that are more complex.

A new edition of IEC 60079-14 is also due in a couple of years. The CDV should be available next year, with the FDIS to follow. There are interesting discussions going on at present about the presentation of the considerable number of changes that will be involved.

In addition to the table of changes, IEC often releases “red-line” versions of standards, so that the detail of each individual change is clearer. There is also a clear direction from TC31 that the Maintenance Team for a standard should produce a “Commented” version, where the reasons for changes are explained, thus helping the user to understand the “why” as well as the “what”, and be better fitted to use the standard. ■

## 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.