



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

**I am writing this at the start of April but looking forward to the first face-to-face international standards meetings for over two years, due to be held in London in the middle two weeks of May.**

I say London, because that is what the official invitations say, but I confess that those of us in the UK may be a bit perplexed to find that some of the meetings are being held at the FM Global offices in Maidenhead, rather than the BSI offices in Chiswick. I know Maidenhead is in commuting distance, but I have never actually thought of it as being part of London. Having said that, we do owe a lot to FM for making the premises available, because BSI just does not have a sufficient number of large rooms available to host all of the IEC TC31 meetings that are scheduled to take place over the fortnight.

I said the meetings are intended to be face-to-face, and that is what the organisers are hoping, but with still five weeks to go, Covid may yet take a hand in the decision making process. Currently, as I write, the infection rate is still rising.

Fortunately, all meetings are actually stated to be “hybrid” so anyone who is not able to travel can link in from home. I have yet to make up my own mind on this as I am classed as semi-vulnerable, so am not keen on the idea of rush-hour commuting on the Great Western from

# The work continues

Paddington, between the base near BSI and Maidenhead.

We seem to have become so used to virtual meetings, that a face-to-face meeting, although definitely desirable, may be seen as a luxury. This started me thinking on how much work has actually been done in the past year or so.

IEC TC31 have kindly published a list of all international standards meetings held within the period March 2021 to April 2022, which has saved me a lot of research.

Three Maintenance teams have been particularly active over this period, taking advantage of the ability to hold many more, but shorter meetings, as there are no travel costs involved. I have mentioned before the need to spread the pain of working “out of normal hours” to accommodate those meeting from Australia and all states in the USA, so most groups have been “rotating the misery”.

Top of the table for the most meetings clearly goes to the maintenance team for IEC 60079-14, the standard covering design, installation and initial inspection of plants. They met on 40 separate occasions in the year, at varying times during the day, for between two hours and four hours. The result has been a radical overhaul of the existing document, possibly a much more thorough job than would have been achieved in two sets of face-to-face meetings. The result was circulated to National Committees for comment and those comments will be discussed initially during the May meetings and a plan formulated on how to meet to resolve them. It is hoped that the outcome of those meetings will be a CDV (the first time for an actual vote from National Committees) followed by an FDIS (Final Draft International Standard) and publication, possibly in 2023.

Second in the league table comes the Maintenance Team for IEC 60079-11: Intrinsic Safety. Like MT 60079-14, they have been struggling with re-organising

their standard to make the requirements flow in a more logical order and, therefore, easier to read and understand. They met 19 times in the period, to agree responses to over 1,000 comments received on the previous document. If the latest draft has been received favourably, they could agree in May to proceed to the FDIS and possibly publication this year.

Third place goes to MT 60079-1: Flameproof. Not quite so far ahead in the maintenance process as parts 11 and 14, the group has met 11 times in the period, to try and bottom the comments from a previous draft document.

Many other groups have also met virtually, though not so extensively, but I will mention both MT 60079-7: Increased Safety, and WG22 (responsible for maintenance of 60079-0 and three other documents). Both have American convenors, but they heroically sacrificed their night’s sleep to run two-day meetings, virtually, at the same Dubai time of 09:00 to 17:00 that had been scheduled for the face-to-face meetings. I was lucky, I only had to join at 06:00!

So, when you mutter about something you don’t understand in a standard, just think of the resource that has gone into making it as good as it is, carefully choosing words that are not easy to misunderstand, but yet translate easily into other languages. ■

## 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.