



SOP TITLE:	Standard Interpretation SOP
SOP NO.:	5-101 First Part Numerical Designator: 1 = General Standards Development Program 2 = Consensus Standards Development Program (CSDP) 3 = National Environmental Laboratory Accreditation Program (NELAP) 4 = Proficiency Testing Program (PTP) 5 = Laboratory Accreditation System Program (LASP) 6 = Advocacy Program 7 = Technical Assistance Program 8 = Forum on Laboratory Accreditation 9 = National Environmental Monitoring Conference (NEMC)
REVISION NO:	0

Committee:	Laboratory Accreditation System Committee	Approved Date:	
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1.0 Purpose and Applicability

- 1.1 This SOP describes the process to follow for the interpretation and explanation of the intent of the 2003 NELAC Standards and Approved TNI Standards. This SOP applies to questions concerning only the 2003 NELAC Standard and the approved TNI Standards, hereafter known as “The Standard”. Any disputes between a laboratory and their Accreditation Body (AB) regarding accreditation are to be handled through the appropriate appeals process established by applicable state laws and regulations.
- 1.2 The interpretation process is not intended to interfere with a NELAP AB’s legal authority to grant, deny, suspend, or revoke accreditation, nor is this SOP designed or intended to deal with such issues.
- 1.3 The NELAP Board Chair, the LASC Chair, and/or the TNI Program Administrator will direct questions concerning methods or technical issues to either the Technical Assistance Committee (TAC), or an expert committee, as appropriate, not the LASC.

2.0 Summary

This SOP provides an avenue for resolution of questions submitted electronically on interpretation of The Standard. The method for submittal is to complete the “Request for Standard Interpretation” form located on the TNI website. Use of this entry form ensures that a question is automatically accepted, cataloged and emailed to the NELAP Board Chair, the LASC Chair and the TNI Program Administrator for review. A consensus of these three individuals shall determine who oversees the final disposition of the question. Timelines are defined for the NELAP Board Chair and LASC Chair to ensure a timely response of the question. Publication of the consensus resolution is then made to the affected parties via email and on the TNI web site.

3.0 Related Documents

- 3.1 SOP 1-104, Control of TNI Documents [To be drafted]

4.0 Definitions

5.0 Procedure

An individual requesting an interpretation of the Standard must:

- 5.1 Submit a request for interpretation electronically by filling out the “Request for Standards Interpretation Form” located on the TNI website www.nelac-institute.org. This request shall include:
 - 5.1.1 The name of the party(ies)
 - 5.1.2 The name of the organization(s)
 - 5.1.3 A contact name, address, telephone number, and e-mail address

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- 5.1.4 The reference for the Standard in question, i.e., Volume, Module, Section, or NELAC Section No.
- 5.1.5 An explanation of the need for the interpretation.
- 5.2 The NELAP Board Chair, the LASC Chair, and/or the TNI Program Administrator will determine by consensus how to respond to the inquiry:
 - 5.2.1 If the consensus determines that the NELAP Board should consider the question, the NELAP Board Chair will respond to the concerned parties by email response within 14 days of receiving the request for an interpretation.
 - 5.2.2 If the consensus determines that the question is not an issue of interpretation of the Standard, the NELAP Board Chair or TNI Program Administrator may direct the question to the TAC, an AB or other appropriate groups for resolution.
 - 5.2.3 If the consensus determines the question can be resolved by the LASC through the process described in this SOP, the NELAP Board Chair will request the LASC Chair to proceed within 14 days of receipt of the request for interpretation.
- 5.3 The LASC Chair will respond to the request for interpretation by the following means:
 - 5.3.1 If the LASC Chair determines that the LASC should consider the question, the LASC Chair shall reply to the NELAP Board Chair by email within 14 days of receiving the request from the NELAP Board Chair, or
 - 5.3.2 If the LASC Chair determines the need for consensus, the question will be emailed to the members of the LASC and discussed on a conference call, or/and
 - 5.3.3 The LASC Chair may appoint a sub committee to further discuss the issue and give recommendations to the full LASC, or/and
 - 5.3.4 The LASC Chair may contact a TNI expert committee or any other committee with the needed information and expertise to help the LASC with the interpretation.
- 5.4 The LASC will have 45 days to reach consensus on interpretation of the Standard and provide its interpretation to the NELAP Board Chair via email.
- 5.5 Before finalizing any interpretation, the NELAP Board will evaluate the interpretation to determine if the following conditions are met:
 - 5.5.1 The interpretation must only answer the question posed by the concerned parties under the scope of this SOP;
 - 5.5.2 Provides a sound and well-reasoned interpretation that is consistent with the Standards; and

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- 5.5.3 The interpretation must be within the boundaries and scope of the standard, that is, an interpretation is neither a new standard nor an addition to the current standard.

- 5.6 If the interpretation does not meet these requirements the NELAP Board will send the interpretation back to the LASC with an explanation and the interpretation process will resume. The chair of the NELAP Board will notify the party who submitted the request of the status of the interpretation.
- 5.7 Once the NELAP Board agrees that the interpretation is finalized, the chair of the NELAP Board or designee will have 10 days to inform the parties of the final decision on the interpretation. The interpretation must be implemented by the NELAP assessors, the recognized AB's, and the NELAP accredited laboratories. The interpretation is in effect until such a time as The Standard is changed or another interpretation has been issued.
- 5.8 The Chair of the NELAP Board, the TNI Program Administrator and the Chair of the LASC shall maintain email correspondence for future reference.
- 5.9 An official record of the original request as well as the final resolution must be recorded on the TNI website and meet the requirements of the TNI SOP for records management.

6.0 References

7.0 SOP Approval Changes

Prev. SOP No.	New SOP No.	Date of Change	Description of Change
	5-101		New Document