

THE INTERAGENCY BOARD STANDARDS COORDINATION SUBGROUP

April
2016

Conformity Assessment Guidance for Public Safety Equipment



INTRODUCTION

The InterAgency Board (IAB) has developed Conformity Assessment Guidance to assist with determining an appropriate method for assessing public safety equipment's conformance with standards or other requirements. The IAB is committed to supporting the responder community by providing equipment and training standards that enable them to safely and effectively perform their missions and operations. Performance standards for equipment are vitally important, and a key first step to a complete conformity assessment solution. However, there must also be processes in place for assessing a product's conformance with other standards or requirements.

The user of this guidance is intended to be a person or organization responsible for developing and maintaining a specific conformity assessment scheme¹. Given that, it is assumed that the user has a level of knowledge regarding conformity assessment, standards and requirements, and related terminology².

PURPOSE

Conformity assessment activities should be tailored to the needs of the product user, suppliers, and regulatory authorities, and an appropriate conformity assessment scheme is the most effective way to instill confidence that equipment meets their requirements. Determining an appropriate conformity assessment process is challenging and dependent on many factors, including but not limited to perceived risk, the market, cost, and speed of change in product design. Consideration of all relevant factors makes it nearly impossible to develop a formula for selecting the appropriate method of conformity assessment. However, this guidance can assist in decision-making.

This guidance has been specifically developed to address equipment used by law enforcement and corrections personnel, but also has applicability for most equipment used by fire fighters, emergency services personnel, and other responders. Examples of law enforcement and corrections equipment include body armor, helmets, shields, less-lethal devices, distraction devices, restraints, firearms, batons, license plate readers, body-worn cameras, and radios.

¹ ISO/IEC 17067, 2013, *Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes*.

² Appendix A contains definitions of relevant conformity assessment terms.

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CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS OPTIONS AND GUIDANCE

There are many accepted processes for conformity assessment, ranging from Supplier's Declaration of Conformity (SDOC), to Approval of Products by an Authoritative Body, to Certification. This guidance uses all three processes as its foundation, and simple explanations of each are below:

- **Supplier's Declaration of Conformity.** An SDOC is a formal statement by the supplier attesting that the product meets requirements; therefore, the SDOC puts the responsibility of a product meeting requirements on the supplier. For the purposes of this guidance, an SDOC provides the minimum acceptable confidence in a product's performance.
- **Approval of Products by an Authoritative Body.** Approved products are those assessed by an authoritative body, which is either a second-party (purchaser) or third-party (neither the supplier nor the purchaser), based on testing, evaluation, or other means to demonstrate that a product meets requirements. Approved products are listed in some type of registry that is publicly accessible. This process offers a higher level of confidence in a product's performance than an SDOC.
- **Certification.** Certification is a statement by a third party that a product meets requirements based on testing, inspection, manufacturing surveillance, and other means. This is the highest level of confidence in a product's performance. Certified products are listed by the certifying body in a registry that is publicly accessible.

Figure 1 provides a graphical overview of the three processes and options within each process. The options and the minimum recommended requirements for each option are:

- **Option 1: Recommended requirements for this option are:**
 1. An SDOC conforming to International Organization for Standardization/International Electrotechnical Commission (ISO/IEC) 17050-1 provided to the user or purchaser.
 2. Supporting documentation conforming to ISO 17050-2 (including a test report based on testing to stated requirements or to product standards) provided to the user or purchaser.
 3. Testing performed by any competent laboratory, including a supplier's laboratory.

Note: Option 1 is the only case for which product standards may or may not be available.

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Supplier's Declaration of Conformity (SDOC)		Approved Products		Product Certification
Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
SDOC meeting requirements of ISO/IEC 17050-1 and 17050-2	SDOC meeting requirements of ISO/IEC 17050-1 and 17050-2	<i>SDOC not necessarily required</i>	<i>SDOC not necessarily required</i>	<i>SDOC not necessarily required</i>
Test report based on testing by any laboratory	Test report based on testing by laboratories accredited to ISO/IEC 17025	Test report based on testing by laboratories accredited to ISO/IEC 17025	Test report based on testing by laboratories accredited to ISO/IEC 17025	Test report based on testing by laboratories accredited to ISO/IEC 17025
		Registry of Approved Products by an authoritative body	Registry of Approved Products by an authoritative body in Compliance with ISO 17065 Requirements	List of Certified Products published by a body accredited to ISO 17065
		<i>Surveillance not necessarily required</i>	Surveillance	Surveillance
			Supplier Quality Management System	Supplier Quality Management System

Increasing Confidence = Increasing Time, Cost, and Resources Required

Figure 1. Overview of Conformity Assessment and Process Options

Option 2: Recommended requirements for this option are:

1. Product standard available.
 2. An SDOC conforming to ISO/IEC 17050-1 provided to the user or purchaser.
 3. Supporting documentation conforming to ISO 17050-2 (including a test report based on testing to product standards) provided to the user or purchaser.
 4. Testing performed by a laboratory accredited to ISO/IEC 17025 for the required tests.
- Option 3: Recommended requirements for this option are:
 1. Product standard available.
 2. A test report conforming to ISO/IEC 17025 provided to the user or purchaser.
 3. Testing performed by a laboratory accredited to ISO/IEC 17025.

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4. A registry of approved products that is maintained by an authoritative body. The authoritative body should have an agreement with the supplier stating that the product will continue to conform.

Notes: An SDOC is not necessarily required because the authoritative body is expected to review supplier claims and test reports. Surveillance of manufacturing process and/or supplier quality management systems are optional.

- Option 4: Recommended requirements for this option are:
 1. Product standard available.
 2. A test report conforming to ISO/IEC 17025 provided to the user or purchaser.
 3. Testing performed by a laboratory accredited to ISO/IEC 17025.
 4. A registry of approved products that is maintained by an authoritative body that is in compliance with ISO/IEC 17065.
 5. Surveillance of manufacturing process.
 6. Supplier quality management system.

Note: An SDOC is not necessarily required because the authoritative body is expected to review supplier claims and test reports.

- Option 5: Recommended requirements for this option are:
 1. Product standard available.
 2. A test report conforming to ISO/IEC 17025.
 3. Testing performed by a laboratory accredited to ISO/IEC 17025.
 4. A registry of certified products that is maintained by a certifying body accredited to ISO/IEC 17065.
 5. Surveillance of manufacturing process by a certifying body accredited to ISO/IEC 17065 (*Note: Surveillance may be subcontracted to an inspection body accredited to ISO/IEC 17020*).
 6. Supplier quality management system.

Notes: An SDOC is not necessarily required because the certification body performs a thorough assessment to verify that the product complies with the standard. Only Option 5 may use the term “certified product.”

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CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT DECISION TOOL

The decision tool is a flowchart that uses the guidance in the previous section as a basis, and is graphically shown in Figure 2. The diamonds represent a sequential order of questions that must be asked, and the options shown correspond to the options shown in Figure 1.

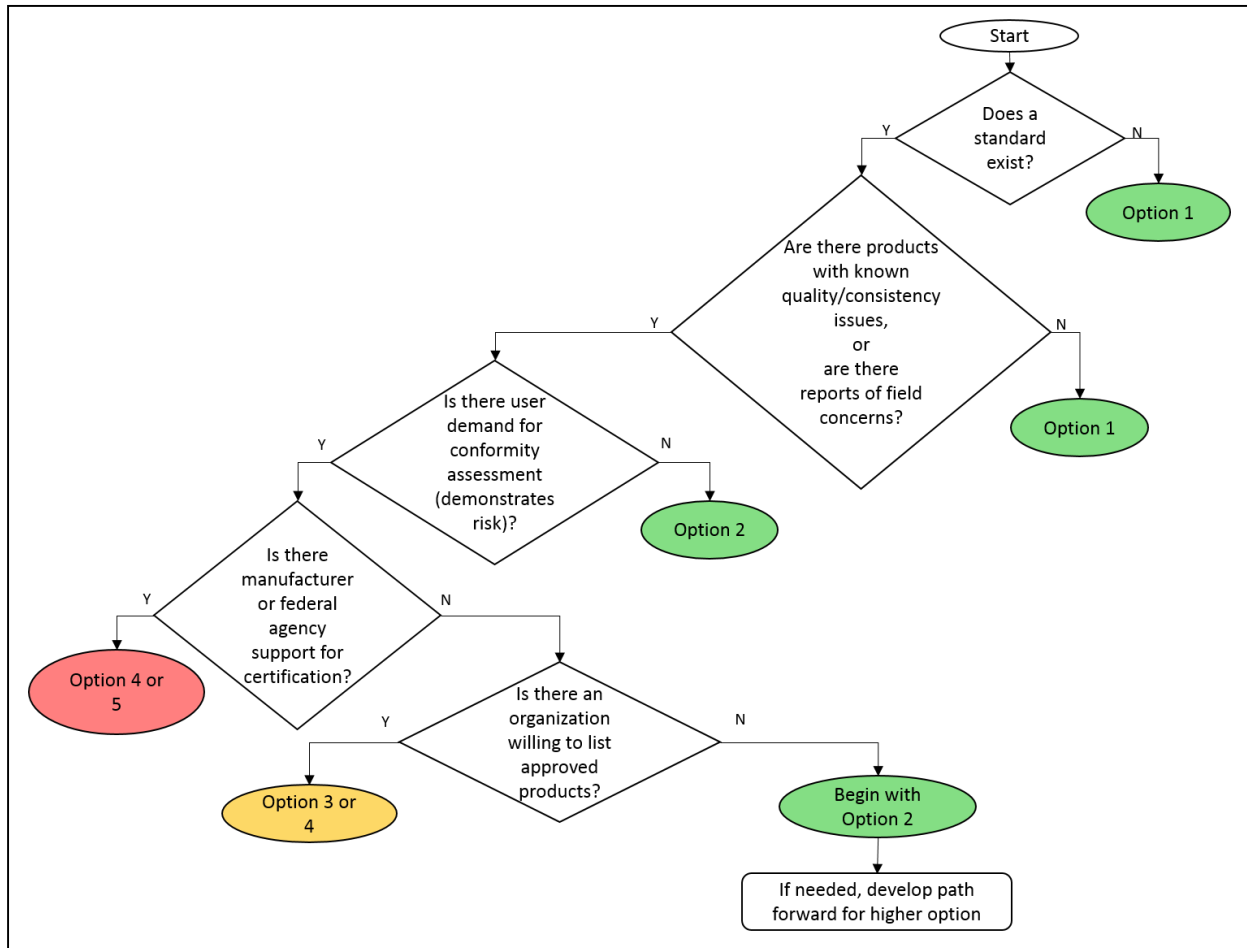


Figure 2. Conformity Assessment Decision Tool

IMPLEMENTING THE CONFORMITY ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Once the decision has been made, implementation requires additional guidance that is beyond the scope of this document. The IAB Standards Coordination Subgroup may be contacted with comments, feedback, or questions via info@interagencyboard.us. Additional information on the IAB is available at www.interagencyboard.org.

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APPENDIX A. DEFINITIONS

1. **Attestation** – issue of a statement, based on a decision following review, that fulfilment of specified requirements has been demonstrated. (ISO/IEC 17000)
2. **Certification** – third-party attestation related to products, processes, systems or persons. (ISO/IEC 17000)
3. **Review** – verification of the suitability, adequacy and effectiveness of selection and determination activities, and the results of these activities, with regard to fulfilment of specified requirements by an object of conformity assessment. (ISO/IEC 17000)
4. **Scheme owner** – person or organization responsible for developing and maintaining a specific conformity assessment scheme. *Note: The scheme owner can be a certification body, a governmental authority, a trade association, a group of certification bodies, or others. (Adapted from ISO/IEC 17067)*
5. **Supplier's Declaration** – first-party attestation. (ISO/IEC 17000)

APPENDIX B. REFERENCES

1. ISO/IEC 17000, 2004, *Conformity assessment — Fundamentals and vocabulary.*
2. ISO/IEC 17020, 2012, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for the operation of various types of bodies performing inspection.*
3. ISO/IEC 17025, 2005, *General requirements for the competence of testing and calibration laboratories.*
4. ISO/IEC 17050-1, 2010, *Conformity assessment — Supplier's declaration of conformity — Part 1: General requirements.*
5. ISO/IEC 17050-2, 2004, *Conformity assessment — Supplier's declaration of conformity — Part 2: Supporting documentation.*
6. ISO/IEC 17065, 2012, *Conformity assessment — Requirements for bodies certifying products, processes and services.*
7. ISO/IEC 17067, 2013, *Conformity assessment — Fundamentals of product certification and guidelines for product certification schemes.*

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CONTRIBUTORS

Name	Department/Organization
Gary Backous	Story County (IA) Sheriff
Charles Cordova	Seattle (WA) Fire Department
Matthew Duggan	Boca Raton (FL) Police Department
Jeffrey Finn	Fairfax (VA) County Police Department
Karen House	Department of Defense, Joint Project Manager Guardian
Martin Hutchings	Sacramento County (CA) Sheriff's Department
Phil Mattson	Department of Homeland Security Office of Standards
Thomas Nolan	Upper Merion Township (PA) Police Department
Tim Rehak	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health
Nicholas Roberts	Unified Police Department of Greater Salt Lake
Cassy Robinson	National Institute of Standards and Technology
Jeffrey Horlick	National Institute of Standards and Technology
Debra Stoe	National Institute of Justice
Marcie Wacker	Ramsey County (MN) Sheriff's Office, International Association of Women Police
Brian Washburn	Santa Clara (CA) Sheriff's Office, Special Operations/Civil Division
Craig Dickerson	Montgomery County (MD) Police Department
Patricia Knudson	Phoenix (AZ) Police Department
Michelle Deane	American National Standards Institute
Matthew McLaughlin	U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command
Dan Shipp	International Safety Equipment Association
Gregory Cade	National Fire Protection Association
Steve Corrado	Underwriter's Laboratory LLC
Michael Fergus	International Association of Chiefs of Police
Pat Gleason	Safety Equipment Institute
Rob Kinsler	Intertek Testing Services/HP White
Mary Mikolajewski	American Society for Testing and Materials International
Dave Otterson	National Law Enforcement and Corrections Technology Center