

## Masco Comment 1 to NIST on OMB Circular A-119

Masco Corporation, whose businesses manufacture and sell a variety of building products such as faucets and plumbing supplies, windows, paint and cabinetry, supports the objectives of the National Technology Transfer and Advancement Act of 1995 and the supporting OMB Circular A-119.

We offer two comments on issues affecting Federal agency participation in standards development. As an important stakeholder in the process of standards development we support federal participation, recognizing that federal participation, support and use of Voluntary Consensus Standards will have the benefit of lowering Federal procurement costs.

1. We note in the OMB Circular that, while the directive is to have Federal Agency participation in the Voluntary Consensus Standards Development process, there is one very significant aspect of the Voluntary Consensus process that is a missing requirement. That requirement needs to be that any Consensus Standards Development must be done under the auspices of an Accredited Standards Development organization which has been accredited by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) and which is using ANSI's full due process system as part of the American National Standards process, resulting in an American National Standard. ANSI is the organization which represents the United States within the International Standards community. ANSI has established processes which Standards Developers may use to ensure true balanced representation of stakeholder groups whose participation is very important to the development of sound standards, and works to prevent undue influence by groups who might otherwise work to create an unbalanced voting block. Finally, to qualify as an ANSI accredited Standards Developer, there is a public review and comment process that allows for appropriate due process of standards. We find that the OMB Circular No. A-119 has completely left this requirement out of its guidance.
2. We note that often, certain stakeholder groups involved in standards development will take a very narrow approach to developing requirements in standards. As an example, with respect to water conservation, taking the position that manufacturers must continually ratchet down water consumption with prescriptive specifications can result in significant consumer dissatisfaction with the resulting plumbing products and plumbing system performance, thus frustrating the conservation objectives for the products. One can reflect back to the low flush volume toilets sold in the early 1990's as a result of mandated standards requirements. At the time, the technologies available to provide a reliable flushing performance at such low volumes had not been developed to the point where they were mature enough to provide the necessary function. More

recently, the US Environmental Protection Agency representatives who develop the WaterSense® specifications for Showerheads, worked with the ASME committee responsible for the Standard covering showerheads to develop a series of performance tests that allow for more properly defined consumer satisfaction using lower flow rates. A key part of the development of the Product Standard and WaterSense specification involved actual consumer research into what does and does not work from the perspective of performance and user satisfaction. Our point here is that an important aspect of Standards Development must be to include consumer/user research and input into the process, such that we can achieve the desired end objective without significantly affecting the necessary utility delivered by the product involved.