

ACTION: Notice of meeting.

SUMMARY: The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) announces its intent to hold a meeting to discuss measurement needs for fire testing laboratories. The meeting will be held at the NIST Gaithersburg campus, on January 20 and 21, 2004, and is open to all interested parties.

DATES: The meeting will begin at 1 p.m. on January 20, 2004, and conclude at noon on January 21, 2004. Those wishing to attend must register by January 15, 2004.

ADDRESSES: The meeting will be held in room B245 of the Polymers Building at the NIST Gaithersburg Campus, 100 Bureau Drive, Gaithersburg, MD.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Those wishing to attend should contact Dr. William Grosshandler at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, Mail Stop 8660, 100 Bureau Drive, Gaithersburg, MD, 20899-8660, or by e-mail at william.grosshandler@nist.gov or by telephone at (301) 975-2310.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: Commerce involving a multitude of materials, construction products, consumer products and fire protection systems is regulated to ensure the fire safety of the public. Standard test methods have been developed over the past 100 years, many based upon research conducted at NIST, that enable these materials and products to be rated as acceptable (or not) for various applications, depending upon regulations enforced by the authority having jurisdiction. By in large, these test methods are prescriptive in nature. The ratings or classifications obtained from these tests provide a relative measure of the one product versus another, but often there is little relation between a rating or classification and the performance of the product or material in an actual fire situation. The distinction between one rating or classification and the next may not be justified by the variability in the behavior of the material or product and the ability to conduct the test in a precise manner. Fire testing is hampered by the complexity of the physical, thermal and chemical processes involved, the variability of the environment under which the product is expected to perform, the fact that fire performance is often an afterthought in the design process, and the high stakes (*i.e.*, potential for loss of life and property) associated with being wrong in the rating. The concern for public safety is countered by a concern not to unreasonably hamper market forces or to put up trade barriers. The following

questions arising from the complexity of the fire testing arena, originally brought up at a NIST workshop on fire test measurements in June, 2001, are in need of further discussion:

- How can we promote best practices for fire testing?
 - What are the major sources of measurement uncertainty in standard fire tests?
 - How can new fire measurement technologies be transitioned into practice, operators be trained, and round-robin testing be better coordinated?
 - Is there a need for a clearing house for information on international harmonization and performance-based codes that impact fire testing?
 - Can the interests of North American fire testing laboratories be best preserved through scientific understanding and best practices?
 - How can two-way communications between fire testing laboratories and code officials, manufacturers of regulated materials and products, and consumer interest groups be improved?
- The meeting will be held at the NIST Gaithersburg campus, on January 20 and 21, 2004, and is open to all interested parties.

Dated: December 22, 2003.

Hratch G. Semerjian,

Acting Deputy Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Institute of Standards and Technology

The 89th Interim Meeting of the National Conference on Weights and Measures

AGENCY: National Institute of Standards and Technology, Commerce.

ACTION: Announcement of public meeting of the National Conference on Weights and Measures.

SUMMARY: Notice is hereby given that the interim meeting of the National Conference on Weights and Measures will be held January 25 through January 28, 2004, at the Hyatt Regency Bethesda, Bethesda, Maryland. This meeting is open to the public. The National Conference on Weights and Measures is an organization of weights and measures enforcement officials of the States, counties, and cities of the United States, and private sector representatives. The interim meeting of the Conference brings together enforcement officials, other government officials, and

representatives of business, industry, trade associations, and consumer organizations to discuss subjects that related to the field of weights and measures technology and administration. Pursuant to (15 U.S.C. 272(b)(6)), the National Institute of Standards and Technology supports the National Conference on Weights and Measures in order to promote uniformity among the States in the complexity of laws, regulations, methods, and testing equipment that comprises regulatory control by the States of commercial weighing and measuring.

DATES: January 25-28, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Hyatt Regency Bethesda, Bethesda, Maryland.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Henry V. Oppermann, Chief, NIST, Weights and Measures Division, 100 Bureau Drive, Stop 2600, Gaithersburg, MD 20899-2600. Telephone (301) 975-4004, or e-mail: owm@nist.gov.

Dated: December 23, 2003.

Hratch G. Semerjian,

Acting Deputy Director.

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DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration

[I.D. 122903C]

Proposed Information Collection; Comment Request; Standardized Application and Performance Report Formats for NMFS Noncompetitive Grants

AGENCY: National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA).

ACTION: Notice.

SUMMARY: The Department of Commerce, as part of its continuing effort to reduce paperwork and respondent burden, invites the general public and other Federal agencies to take this opportunity to comment on proposed and/or continuing information collections, as required by the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, Public Law 104-13 (44 U.S.C. 3506(c)(2)(A)).

DATES: Written comments must be submitted on or before March 5, 2004.

ADDRESSES: Direct all written comments to Diana Hynek, Departmental Paperwork Clearance Officer, Department of Commerce, Room 6625, 14th and Constitution Avenue, NW,