

JULY 2001 NEWS

THE STANDARDISATION NEEDS OF THE TRANSPORT SYSTEMS SECTOR

An International Conference with the theme of “Intelligent Transport Systems – The Road to Future Standards” took place in June at the United Nations, Geneva. It was held under the auspices of UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe), ISO and its sister organisations IEC(International Economic Commission) and ITU(International Telecommunication Union). Intelligent Transport Systems are essentially transport management systems that apply information technology and telecommunications to the resolution of transport problems, such as safety, congestion, pollution and even infrastructure deterioration, and in doing so may provide policy makers, government, operators, industry and the general public with tools that will help them to meet their transport objectives more efficiently, cost-effectively and safely.

The conference aims to strengthen the linkage between the priorities of the ITS sector and the standards which ISO develops for it. To achieve this, experts will be participating from major organisations such as Motorola, Siemens and General Motors as well as for government organisations such as the US Department of Transportation and the European International Telecommunication Union. The results of the conference will guide the future orientation of the ISO technical committee ISO/TC 204 on Transport information and control systems, in which currently 19 countries participate.

ISO can facilitate interoperability and seamless transport systems by developing standards for areas such as terminology, interfaces, data transfer and communications.

SIGMA CONFERENCE

The 2nd Annual SIGMA Conference was held in May and had the theme “The Sigma Project: Sustainability in practice”. It aimed to encourage organisations’ awareness and lead action on sustainable development. Launched at the conference were the SIGMA guidelines for sustainability management and the pilot exercise with its original partners. The SIGMA Project is funded by the Department of Trade and Industry and endorsed by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions. SIGMA can develop a knowledge and management framework empowering businesses to navigate through challenges of sustainable development. Further information can be found at the new website www.projectsigma.com.

It is hoped that the slow moves towards more sustainable practices will gain an impetus by the government’s recent introduction of a Climate Change Levy. This Levy should provide fiscal pressure to encourage more energy efficiency schemes and so reduce the emissions of greenhouse gases.

QUALITY AWARD PROGRAM

According to a report in Quality Progress, The Bush administration has decided to go ahead with the President’s Quality Awards programme for 2001, but there after its future is undecided. The Office of Personnel Management (OPM) initially decided to cancel the awards because of diminished interest in them. The Federal Quality Institute closed in 1993 and the Annual Conference of Federal Quality was also discontinued in 1998. There has not been a presidential level winner of the award for the last two years. The President’s Quality Award programme is based on the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Award Programme for private sector businesses.

“CORDON BLEU” SERVICE STATIONS

The long suffering motorist can now be treated to the taste of France on our motorways. A company called Extra, who is part of a French consortium, have opened their first service area on the A14/M11 near Cambridge. Their competitors are Granada, Welcome Break and Road Chef who currently control 90% of Britain's motorway service areas. A Director of Extra has been reported to say “we will set a new quality benchmark for food at Britain's motorway service stations, and we will be bringing a lot of ideas from France”.

RIVER POLLUTION

It has been reported that many British rivers have failed to meet the European Union Water Standards. A study by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) has shown that pollution and water consumption, mainly by agriculture and industry, has left some rivers in need of major restoration works if they are to comply with the new EU environmental legislation. The WWF's Water and Wetland Index, have shown that the Severn and the Trent are among the worst, both rated poorly compared to rivers in Hungary and Estonia, falling well short of water and habitat quality standards that will be compulsory by 2015 under the Water Framework Directive. The Dee in Wales and the Foyle, Lagan and Bann in Northern Ireland also fall short of the same goals, indicating the need for investment in the rivers and the wetlands of UK.

NEW ISO DIRECTORY

ISO has recently published a new edition (fifth edition – ISBN 92 67 10329 6) of the ISO directory of ISO9000 (quality management) and ISO14000 (environmental management) accreditation and certification bodies. In 1999 edition of the directory only 557 entries were included and in 1995, there were only 316 entries compared to the new directory that includes 729 certification bodies from 94 countries. These organisations offer auditing and certification/registration services to the ISO9000 and/or ISO14000 standards. The directory also includes 41 national accreditation bodies who approve certification bodies as competent to carryout certification. United Kingdom comes second amongst the top six countries in terms of the number of certification bodies. For more information please visit ISO Web site: www.iso.ch

STANDARDS UPDATE

BS 4987-1:2001 Coated macadam (asphalt concrete) for roads and other paved areas. Specification for constituent materials and for mixtures. This replaces BS 4987-1:1993 which has been withdrawn

BS4987-2:2001 Coated macadam (asphalt concrete) for roads and other paved areas. Specification for transport, laying and compaction. This replaces BS 4987-2:1993 which has been withdrawn.

PD 0017:2001 Business Documents –Guidance on Effective Layout and Presentation. This guide aims to establish standard protocols for document presentation and contains templates for most business documents such as letters, memos, faxes, reports, minutes and emails.

SALMONELLA INFECTION REDUCED DUE TO VACCINATION OF HENS

A report produced by the Advisory Committee for the Safety of Food showed that, the number of cases of Salmonella in humans had been reduced, by more than half since 1997, when the British Egg Industry Council (BEIC) launched a campaign to eradicate Salmonella from eggs. Government advisors have confirmed that the number of people

suffering from food poisoning has been reduced greatly since British Farmers started vaccinating their hens against Salmonella. According to Public Health Laboratory Service figures, nearly 14,500 people suffered from the infection last year in comparison to about 32,500 people in 1997. Three out of four eggs produced in UK now conform to Lion Quality Scheme Standard set by the BEIC.

FRENCH RESISTANCE OF NEW WORLD WINES

French campaigners have forced one of the biggest Californian labels to abandon plans to produce wine at a vineyard in southern France. After 12 months, the Robert Mondavi company said it was reluctantly pulling out of its project to produce a high quality wine at Aniane, a small town 25 miles from Montpellier. The Aniane wine war has become another symbol in the French fight against the supposed imperialism of US multinational corporations. The local winemakers, hunters and environmentalists opposed the plan to bring Californian know-how to French wine. Initially the council of Aniane supported the project and believed it would put the town on the world wine map and boost their economy. Modavi, which markets southern French wines in US under the Vichon label, had intentions of producing a top quality wine to match the best regional products. The opposition believed that the Californians were threatening traditional methods of making wine.

VOLVO FACES MANSLAUGHTER CHARGES

According to a recent report in the Independent newspaper, the Swedish car manufacturer, Volvo was placed under French criminal investigation for manslaughter, accused of covering up a defect in the brakes of one of its models. This investigation started because of a road accident, two years ago, where 2 children were crushed to death by a Volvo 850 when it collided with a parked car. A preliminary investigation has concluded that the accident was not caused by driver error, but by a catastrophic failure of the car's brakes. It is believed that Volvo was aware of this serious problem in the braking system, but instead of recalling all the cars, it allegedly sent inadequate instructions to its dealers to correct the faults when the cars came in for normal routine servicing. The president of Volvo France, was placed under formal investigation after his summons by the magistrate. The company denies negligence and says there is no proof that the accident was caused by faulty brakes.

CAN STANDARDS IMPROVE SERVICES FOR CONSUMERS?

Due to the changes taking place in the world's economy and the growing importance of the service sector, the question is whether International Standards could play a role for ensuring that services are "up to standard", in the same way as they have for other industries. However, International standardisation of services poses unique challenges. Services often depend on cultural characteristics that don't translate across national borders. Also other aspects of services, such as direct customer contact, cannot be easily defined and hence, standardised. Therefore, it can be difficult to identify objective ways of measuring conformity to the requirements of a service standard.

ISO/COPOLCO, the ISO Committee on Consumer Policy, had recently organised a workshop to review past developments in standardisations of services and to identify future opportunities in this field. By bringing together consumer representatives, standards' writers and other professionals from the service industries, the workshop intended to thoroughly examine the various alternatives and the possibility of producing guidelines for writing International Standards for all types of services.

NEW PRODUCTS

Software

Get more benefit from your quality system and save time and money by using our new software packages – ISO 9000 Quality Manager Database 2000 and Toolkit 2000. Both software packages require a PC running Windows 95 or above with MS Word 97 or above. The software provides a comprehensive toolkit and database for developing your own quality assurance system. The Database contains four modules – Document and Data Control; Internal Quality Audits; Non-conformances/Corrective Action and Management Review.

They will prove invaluable in helping to achieve ISO9000 certification and if you already have some elements of a Quality Assurance system in place, the Quality Manager will allow the incorporation of existing documents into the new system.

For further information or to order these products please contact QM&T Ltd.

Price Quality Manager Toolkit 2000	£150.00 incl. VAT
Price Quality Manager Database 2000	£225.00 incl. VAT