

Guidance on the Use of Electronic Systems within the ANS Process

This document is for informational use only and does not supersede the requirements set forth in the ANSI Essential Requirements: Due process requirements for American National Standards (ANSI Essential Requirements), which contains the procedures that govern the American National Standards (ANS) process. Adherence to this document is not required in order to be found in compliance with the ANSI Essential Requirements.

In light of the increasing reliance on interactive electronic systems or databases to support the standards development process, the following considerations and recommended practices are offered to encourage implementations that are consistent with the due process safeguards established in the *ANSI Essential Requirements* (www.ansi.org/essentialrequirements). An interactive electronic system or database is a tool that allows collaboration between standards developers and participants in the standards development process.

1. Directions for use (guidance documentation) should be readily available and comprehensible to a new user. Guidance documentation should include information regarding how to use the specific system to perform the specific functions it is intended to accomplish or support. These may (or may not) include:
 - How to join committees and email subscription lists;
 - Project/Issue participation;
 - Submission of contributions;
 - Ballots/voting;
 - Calendar/Meeting management;
 - Submission of comments;
 - Action item management; and
 - Participation requirements tracking (voting, meeting attendance, etc.).
2. Where a system requires a password to gain access, a reasonably accessible source for assistance should be available in cases of password errors or problems. Use of an automatic “forgot password” verification system would be acceptable within this context.
3. Safeguards should exist to allow a user to:
 - confirm successful sign-in/access to the system;
 - confirm successful acceptance of contributions by the system, e.g., comments, votes, proposals;
 - download, print or save a copy of submitted contributions; and
 - obtain a receipt that documents a contribution (automatic response email, confirmation landing page, etc.).
4. Where a system requires comments to be submitted on individual sections of a proposed standard, any receipt should indicate the specific section or sections of the proposed standard on which the commenter has submitted comments.

5. The ability to copy comments applicable to more than one section of a standard is helpful.
6. The date and time (including time zone) of deadlines should be specified for users clearly and visibly.
7. If an electronic system is not operational for a period of time, then a back-up option should exist or consideration should be given to extending the timeline associated with the open action.
8. If an electronic system goes down, consideration should be given to issuing a notice advising users, for example: “We are aware that our electronic website is down and are working to restore it....”