

# WHAT'S NEW WITH TAPPI TEST METHODS?

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*CHANGE IS IN THE AIR—EVEN FOR THE PROCESS USED TO REVIEW AND DEVELOP TEST METHODS.*

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**B**Y NOW, MANY TAPPI MEMBERS KNOW THAT CHANGE IS in the air. The recommendations of the 2010 Committee are being implemented as the TAPPI organization strives to address the needs of our members in a rapidly changing world. TAPPI's Technical Divisions, Committees, and Local Sections are internalizing these changes as they evaluate the way they operate. And since the idea behind 2010 is that the change must be in the best interests of the various segments of the TAPPI membership, not all of the Divisions and Committees will change in the same way. All of the new "TAPPI Communities" will have much more freedom to structure themselves in a fashion that will allow for the most efficient operation.

But there is at least one process within TAPPI that has always operated within a rather rigid structure: the development and review of TAPPI Test Methods. Based on market research, we know that this product is one of TAPPI's best-known "brands" throughout the world. So while the Technical Divisions and Committees—the groups heretofore responsible for the integrity and quality of the Test Methods—move into uncharted territory, the challenge will be in keeping the TAPPI Test Methods current and useful for the many companies that rely on these methods to do business.

Since the regulations that govern TAPPI Test Methods are currently based on the existing Division and Committee structure, the Quality and Standards Management Committee (the committee of the Board of Directors charged with maintaining this program) realized that the process for reviewing and developing these documents will need to adapt so that it can accommodate the fluid and flexible community structures of the future. The Q&SMC has been working on these changes for several months, and the plans are to implement them with all deliberate speed so that the TAPPI Test Methods can continue to be a premiere source of technical information.

At the same time, several "Transition Teams" have been formed to move TAPPI in the direction of the 2010 recommendations. One of these—the "Bureaucracy Busters"—has been charged with identifying and eliminating wasteful bureaucracy. No one should be surprised to learn that when this Transition Team asked TAPPI's volunteer leaders to identify such unnecessary bureaucratic processes, the procedure for reviewing TAPPI Test Methods (and also the process for Technical Information Paper review) was high on the list. If that does surprise you, then you probably haven't been active on a committee that is trying to cut through the red tape to get a new or revised Test Method on the books.

There are good reasons to have some kind of structure in order to properly develop or review a document that the industry uses as a "standard." Although TAPPI has not used that word in more than 20 years to describe this product, by all definitions used in the industrial and association worlds, the TAPPI Test Methods are "standards." The consensus process used to review and develop Test Methods falls in line with the generally accepted legal requirements that most technical associations accept for developing standards: open meetings, access to committee membership, consideration of expressed views and concerns of all interested parties, periodic review, and a strong antitrust policy. Anyone who wants to participate in the review process for TAPPI Test Methods has the ability to do so, and anyone whose views may indicate that a method needs revision or correction can make their opinions known through the regulated process.

It is that "regulated process," however, that sometimes makes a few heads spin. Anyone who has been caught up in the TAPPI Committee Assignment (CA) system knows what I mean: pink forms to start, blue forms to end, ballots of various hues flying around, task group chairmen sorting out reports and resolving comments (if we *have* a task group chairman—sometimes the committee chairman gets it by default), etc., etc., etc. Although some

regulations, written reports, and ballots are necessary to have a quality program, we expect considerable simplification as we think of new ways to accomplish our goals.

At deadline time for this article, the guidelines are still in the process of being completed, so I can't give you all the details right now. But many of you don't want to hear them anyway! That's part of the thought behind the new system—we will strive to make it as easy as possible for anyone to participate in reviewing the Test Methods if they wish, while at the same time keeping committee members who may not have a special interest in the documents from having to respond to ballots just because they happen to belong to a committee for other reasons.

In August, TAPPI members who currently belong to one of the committees that develop test methods received special notification of the new system and were asked to indicate their interest in individual documents related to the committees. They may select all documents in a particular subject category if they wish, or they may pick just the ones they want to receive ballots on. Once this information is gathered, we will form a Standard Specific Interest Group (SSIG) for each Test Method. Only those persons who indicate their interest will be part of the SSIG and will be asked to cast their votes. Members will be able to join or leave an SSIG anytime simply by notifying TAPPI—no formal committee applications to fill out.

We also are publicizing the new system to the entire membership, which may help us identify others who are not currently active on a technical committee but who may have a special interest in participating in one or more SSIGs. This information has been printed on a flyer being delivered to TAPPI members along with this issue of *TAPPI JOURNAL*. All that will be required to join an SSIG will be an indication of interest and a TAPPI individual membership in good standing.

Another change under the new system will allow members who do not join one of the SSIGs to have an opportunity to register comments on new or revised methods. This “public review” will include notification through *TAPPI JOURNAL* of methods being reviewed, with details on how to view the drafts via the TAPPI web site.

What about the other popular set of technical documents—the Technical Information Papers (TIPs)? These documents have never gone through the rigorous review that Test Methods have, so they are not really considered “standards” in a legal sense. But we have determined that they generally fall into three categories:

1. Data and calculations, which rarely change and would only need regular review when mistakes are discovered
2. Resource information (such as references to suppliers of particular pieces of equipment or materi-

als), which mainly needs updating when source information changes

3. Periodically reviewed documents (those which need a regular review over a given period of time, to be determined by the developers of the document).

The Q&SMC and the current technical committees will be working over the next several months to place the TIPs into these categories, and the developers of the TIPs (whether within the committee structure or not) will be called upon to provide their expertise when these documents need updating.

So watch for the changes—they're in the works now. We hope that we can continue to make one of TAPPI's oldest products remain one of its best. If you have comments or concerns, please contact me at: [cbohanan@tappi.org](mailto:cbohanan@tappi.org), or by phone at +1 770-209-7276. **TJ**

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