



ASTM INTERNATIONAL
Helping our world work better

CONSUMER PARTICIPATION: EFFECTIVE ENGAGEMENT IN STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT



Every day, people around the world expect that their purchases — from sports equipment to vacuum cleaners — will be reliable and perform as expected. ASTM International standards play a crucial role in helping to ensure the quality and safety of these and other products, building trust between manufacturers and consumers.

ASTM International is committed to facilitating the development and implementation of voluntary consensus standards through stakeholder engagement and development. As part of this obligation, we assist consumer representatives who wish to influence the development and use of standards for consumer products, processes, and services. This document provides information and resources to help consumer representatives be effective partners in the standards system.

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WHAT IS ASTM INTERNATIONAL?

Formed in 1898, ASTM International (formerly the American Society for Testing and Materials) is a not-for-profit global leader in the development and delivery of voluntary consensus standards. More than 30,000 technical experts from across 150 countries come together to write and develop ASTM International standards. They represent global manufacturers, testing labs, government regulators, consumers and consumer advocates, medical professionals, engineers, academics, and more.

ASTM International standards cover more than 90 different industry sectors, including paints, plastics, textiles, construction, the environment, consumer products, aviation, robotics and much more. Our standards include test methods, specifications, practices, guides, classifications, and terminology.

Our certification, training, and proficiency testing programs further support and complement the voluntary consensus standards developed by ASTM International.



230
Terminology Standards
Definitions of terms; explanations of symbols, abbreviations, or acronyms



170
Classifications
Arrangement or division of materials, products, systems, or services into groups based on characteristics such as origin, composition, properties, or use



1,300
Guides
A compendium of information or series of options that does not recommend a specific course of action



5,500
Test Method
A procedure that produces a test result



3,300
Practices
Instructions for performing specific operations that do not produce a test result



3,200
Specifications
Requirements to be satisfied by a material, product, system, or service

6

**TYPES OF
ASTM INTERNATIONAL
STANDARDS**

WHY ARE STANDARDS IMPORTANT AND HOW DO THEY BENEFIT CONSUMERS?

A standard is a document that has been developed and established within the consensus principles of ASTM's procedures and regulations.

Standards provide information to consumers, manufacturers, regulators, and retailers, and enhance safety, reliability and performance of the products, processes, and services consumers use.

Standards make their mark on almost every product, process, and service, including housing (building codes), food (organic food, sanitary requirements and can sizes), clothing (sizing and labels), household appliances (safety, energy consumption and reliability), customer services (protection of personal information) and many others.



A key example of the vital role standards play is the consumer safety specification for toy safety (F963), which establishes safety requirements for toys for children under the age of 14. The standard sets guidelines and test methods to prevent injuries related to choking, sharp edges, magnet ingestion, flammability, and much more. F963 became mandatory in the United States in 2008 when the landmark U.S. Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act was signed into law. All toys sold in the United States must meet F963 safety requirements.



Consumer safety standards include:



Safety warnings and testing requirements for cribs, strollers, bassinets, and other juvenile products



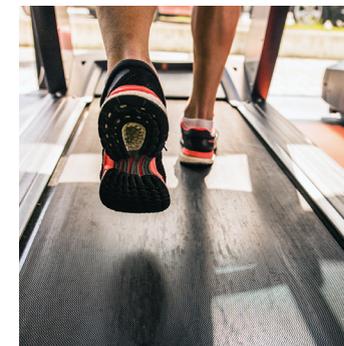
Labeling and packaging requirements for liquid laundry packets



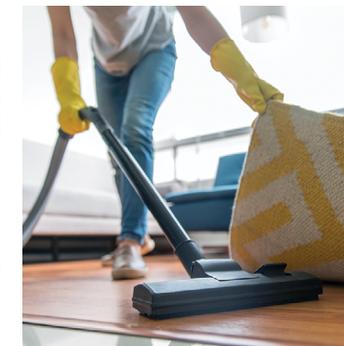
Home and public playground equipment safety performance requirements



Candle fire safety labeling and container requirements



Sports and fitness equipment design and construction requirements



Cleaning products such as vacuum cleaners, brooms, and mops



Leisure activities like amusement rides

However, consumers are impacted by many other standards that are covered in various ASTM committees, such as standards for children's sleepwear, mattress flammability, vacuum cleaners, paint and art materials, footwear, and several others.

The main ASTM committees creating standards for consumer products, and consumer used goods and services are:

- Consumer Products (F15)
- Sports Equipment, Playing Surfaces and Facilities (F08)
- Amusement Rides and Devices (F24)

HOW DO STANDARDS GET DEVELOPED AND USED?

ASTM International standards are developed within one of our nearly 150 technical committees. The work begins within a technical subcommittee, where interested stakeholders and members develop a new standard or revise an existing standard based on marketplace need.

Stakeholders Involved in the Development of Standards



Consumer Groups

- Kids in Danger (KID)
- Consumer Federation of America (CFA)
- Keeping Babies Safe
- Consumer Reports (CR)
- American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP)
- Safe Kids Worldwide
- ANEC



Trade Associations

- Juvenile Product Manufacturers Association (JPMA)
- The Toy Association
- Fashion Jewelry and Accessories Trade Association (FJATA)
- American Home Furnishings Alliance (AHFA)
- BIFMA



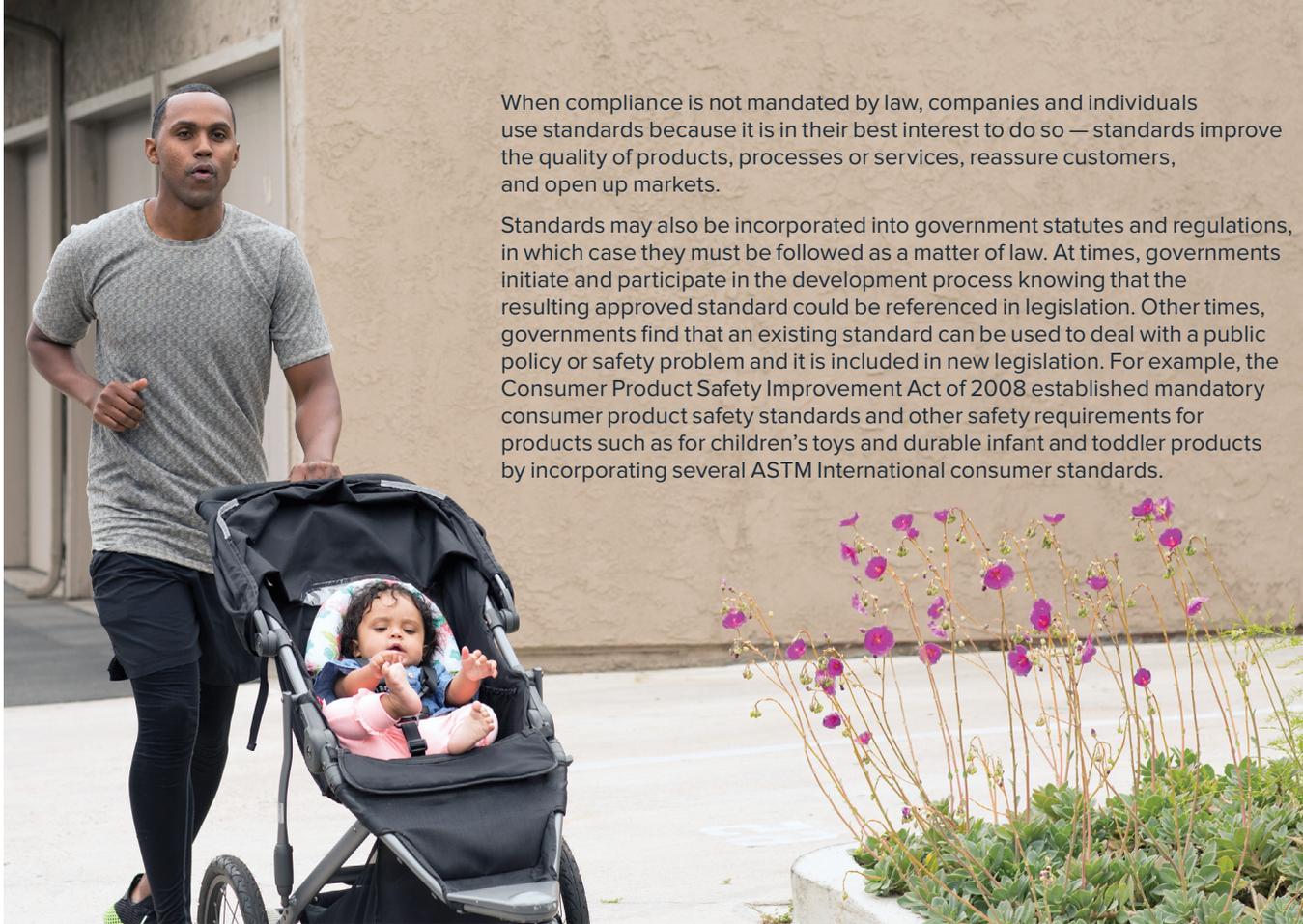
Government Agencies and Regulators

- Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC)
- The Food and Drug Administration (FDA)
- Health Canada
- The European Commission
- Human Health and Services (HHS)



Test Labs/Academia

- Small, medium, and large testing labs such as Bureau Veritas, SGS, Intertek, QIMA, others
- Colleges/Universities
- Research facilities

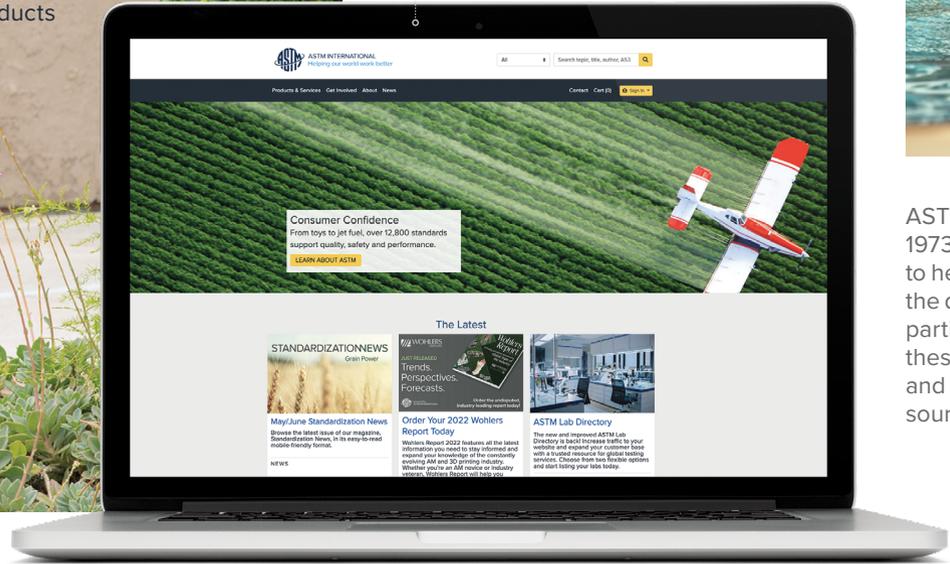


When compliance is not mandated by law, companies and individuals use standards because it is in their best interest to do so — standards improve the quality of products, processes or services, reassure customers, and open up markets.

Standards may also be incorporated into government statutes and regulations, in which case they must be followed as a matter of law. At times, governments initiate and participate in the development process knowing that the resulting approved standard could be referenced in legislation. Other times, governments find that an existing standard can be used to deal with a public policy or safety problem and it is included in new legislation. For example, the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 established mandatory consumer product safety standards and other safety requirements for products such as for children’s toys and durable infant and toddler products by incorporating several ASTM International consumer standards.



For a full list of ASTM committees, refer to the ASTM website under the **Get Involved** tab on the homepage.



ASTM International Committee F15 on Consumer Products was founded in 1973 at the request of the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) to help keep dangerous products out of the hands of consumers through the development of voluntary consensus. Today, more than **1,000** members participate, overseeing the development of over **100** standards. Typically, these standards are developed and revised based on regular review of incident and injury data received through the CPSC, poison control centers, and other sources to address known hazards. Standards are revised as needed.

WHAT IS THE PROCESS OF DEVELOPING AN ASTM STANDARD?

For a standard to be published as an ASTM International standard, the document must successfully move through and pass ASTM's rigorous balloting process. Balloting begins within a subcommittee before moving to the main committee/society/public review where all members have an opportunity to vote. If the consensus requirements at all levels are met, it then moves on to the Committee on Standards (COS) to ensure proper procedures were followed and due process achieved.



How A Standard Gets Created

- 01 Someone Recognizes the Need for:**
 - A better test...
 - A new specification...
 - A safer product...
- 02 Task Group: Convene Key Stakeholders**
 - 6-8 people is ideal
 - Register a work item
 - Circulate and discuss initial drafts in person and online
- 03 Subcommittee: Bring in More Experts**
 - E-ballot the draft standard
 - Address negative votes and comments
 - E-ballot again or advance to main committee
- 04 Main Committee (and Society): Widen the Lens**
 - E-ballot standard
 - Address any negatives and comments
 - Back to subcommittee, if needed
- 05 ASTM International Committee on Standards: Review and Approval**
 - Process review if necessary (e.g., handling of negatives)
- 06 Online and Print Publication**
 - ASTM International staff formats final draft
- 07 Marketplace Use***
 - Manufacturers
 - Governments
 - Trade associations
 - Consumers
 - ASTM develops related services as needed

* ASTM publicizes purpose and availability of the standard

Striking Balance When Developing a Standard

All participating ASTM members are classified based on the interests they serve or represent, either as a user, consumer, general interest, or producer member. For example, a toy manufacturer would be classified as a producer on the ASTM F15.22 Toy Safety Subcommittee. A parent concerned with a choking hazard of a toy would be classified as a consumer. Labs testing a toy to a standard would be a general interest member. Classifications are determined by the subcommittee officers or main committee membership secretary.

Technical Committees are Balanced



To ensure balance and fairness in the process, producer members cannot hold more official votes than the users, consumers, and general interest members combined, nor can someone from the same company hold more than one vote within a committee. Regardless of voting status, all members have access to and can vote on a standard during the balloting process to have their comments considered. Balance amongst members participating in the standards development process is vital to ensure multiple viewpoints are considered.

WHAT IS THE VALUE OF CONSUMER PARTICIPATION IN THE PROCESS?

For people interested in consumer issues, standards activities provide a rich opportunity for involvement and change. Consumers and consumer representatives often participate on national and international policy and advisory committees of standards organizations. Regulators value consumer representation when organizations draft standards. It ensures that there is a balance of interests and that the resulting standards support public policy. Industry recognizes that consumer representation can improve the acceptability of standards and ensure they are tailored to the needs of the buying public and represent real world use.

Consumer representatives are often privy to important facts about the way products, processes, and services are used. It was consumer representatives who worked to eliminate drop side cribs, improve and strengthen warnings for liquid laundry packet hazards, and begin the development of standards for consumer beach umbrellas after flyaway incidents lead to serious and fatal injuries.



Because ASTM International places such a high value on consumer input, we strive to make consumer engagement as easy as possible.

We offer:

- Affiliate (free) membership
- Trainings
- Travel reimbursement to attend standards development meetings (upon request and approval)

And of course, like all members, consumers can participate fully in the balloting process.

“Consumers are critical to the standards development process and to ensuring that ASTM International delivers the best possible standards for all of us. Consumers, advocates from consumer organizations, and representatives of consumer-focused government agencies bring a unique and important lens of expertise and experience to standards work. As a result, many people are positively impacted by the consumer product standards that ASTM International develops, from toys to candles, sports equipment to playgrounds, to juvenile products and more.”

– **Kathie Morgan,**
ASTM International President

WHAT ARE MY RESPONSIBILITIES FOR PARTICIPATION IN THE STANDARDS DEVELOPMENT PROCESS?

Your primary responsibility as a consumer representative is to bring non-commercial/personal views and concerns to the table. To get the consumer viewpoint across effectively, representatives must be committed to building consensus among committee members and must participate fully in the work of the committee. New representatives can make the best impact on other committee members by:

- Understanding the issues (including technical issues)
- Presenting convincing evidence and reasoned arguments backing the consumer viewpoint
- Respecting the viewpoints and perspectives of other committee members

To be successful, the consensus process depends on members working together with an attitude of collaboration and collegiality in a safe and comfortable environment. All interactions are professional and everyone involved is treated with dignity and respect. Each member is expected to contribute in good faith to the standardization activities of their committee(s).



Consumer representatives themselves have identified several attributes that are important for effective participation:

- self-confidence and willingness to present a viewpoint even if it is a minority view
- good critical-thinking and verbal skills
- curiosity and willingness to learn new things
- has time to devote to preparation, travel, and participation
- is self-motivated and disciplined
- general understanding of how committees and organizations work
- is comfortable with receiving and absorbing new information
- is comfortable with asking questions
- has a willingness to follow through with a project that may last months or years
- an interest in making a positive mark on safety

Some ASTM technical subcommittees are formed primarily to work on one particular standard, while others continue to develop a set of standards for a material, product, system or service. The average time for the development of a new standard is 18 months. Revisions to existing standards can be approved in six months or less. The development time is largely dependent on the urgency of need and the extent to which the volunteer members are willing to move things forward. Once approved, ASTM standards are reviewed at least every five years and removed from publication if not revised or reapproved after eight years.

Working with other technical committee members, consumer representatives propose and comment on the wording of a draft standard. Committee members may also undertake or participate in research on specific issues. Ultimately, as committee members, consumer representatives vote to approve or disapprove standards the committee develops. All technical changes to an ASTM standard must achieve consensus through the official balloting process before they can be approved and published.

Additional Tips for Successful Engagement Within an ASTM Committee :



Participate in meetings

Participating in a standards development meeting, listening in, and engaging in the discussion can help elevate the consumer viewpoint.



Vote on ballots

All members, regardless of classification or voting status, can access and vote on the standards when they are on a ballot. Don't be afraid to submit comments with your ballot! Ensure your comments provide as much detail as possible, contain supporting evidence, and when possible, include suggestions on how to improve the standard being proposed in the ballot.



Ask questions

If any part of the process is confusing, ask questions! Procedural questions or any questions about ASTM can be directed to the assigned ASTM Committee Staff Manager, who can be a great resource for questions on the process. Questions about the content of a ballot item can be directed to the standard's technical contact or member who is leading the effort.



Learn the process

The ASTM Regulations govern the standards development process. They can be helpful for understanding how balance is achieved in a committee, how a negative vote on a ballot is addressed, and how general business is conducted. A consumer representative's failure to understand these procedures and use them effectively will limit their effectiveness. ASTM offers several trainings for new members. A listing of the trainings and other resources can be found in our Virtual Classroom.



Brush up on your technical expertise

Several standards deal with technical issues, such as product strength, flexibility, brittleness, permeability, corrosiveness, and compatibility. It may be a challenge for a consumer representative to communicate the consumer viewpoint in this technical environment. To be truly effective, a representative may have to present supporting evidence to back their viewpoint. This may take the form of scientific or academic studies, surveys, accident or injury data, or comparative testing of products.



Consider your risk tolerance

Understand that committee members will do their best to "design out" potential hazards. However, other possible solutions could involve safeguarding against a hazard or providing effective warnings or instructions. In some cases, an educated and informed fact-based decision will be made to accept certain risks.



Relationship building

One of the best things you can do is build relationships within your committees. Many members have insights as to the who, what, when, where that can help you more efficiently navigate certain meetings, roadblocks, etc. Many members are long term participants and can help you gain historical context and insights that might help further your efforts. Mentorship opportunities are also available.



Accept the Challenge

Standards development meetings are a great way to build leadership skills and improve the safety of products consumers use every day! An exchange of ideas among various viewpoints can lead to strong and effective standards.

01

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Additional Resources

Important ASTM Links

ASTM Consumer Hub Website
go.astm.org/consumer

**ASTM Regulations Governing
ASTM Technical Committees**
www.astm.org/media/pdf/regs_Regulations.pdf

**ASTM Member Classroom
for Training**
www.astm.org/products-services/training-courses/member-training.html

**ASTM Officer Handbook
(not only for officers!)**
www.astm.org/media/pdf/Handbook_5-11-20.pdf

External Resources

**American National Standards
Institute Consumer
Engagement**
www.ansi.org/outreach/consumers/consumer-affairs

**Consumer Federation
of America**
consumerfed.org

Consumer Reports
www.consumerreports.org

Keeping Babies Safe
keepingbabiesafe.org

Kids in Danger
kidsindanger.org

**U.S. Consumer Product
Safety Commission**
www.cpsc.gov

**US Consumer Product
Safety Commission Consumer
Ombudsman**
www.cpsc.gov/About-CPSC/Consumer-Ombudsman

**U.S. CPSC NEISS
Injury Database**
www.cpsc.gov/cgi-bin/NEISSQuery/home.aspx

Commonly Used Acronyms

ANPR – Advanced Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

ANSI – American National Standards Institute

ASTM – ASTM International

CPSC – Consumer Product Safety Commission

NPR – Notice of Proposed Rulemaking

SDO – Standards Development Organization

TAG – Technical Advisory Group (for an ISO committee)

TC – Technical Committee

TG – Task Group

VCS – Voluntary Consensus Standard



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Helping our world work better

Committed to serving global societal needs, ASTM International positively impacts public health and safety, consumer confidence, and overall quality of life. We integrate consensus standards – developed with our international membership of volunteer technical experts – and innovative services to improve lives... Helping our world work better.