



**ISO/TC 67**

**Materials, equipment and offshore structures for  
petroleum and natural gas industries**

Secretariat: American Petroleum Institute, 1220 L Street NW, Washington, DC 20005 USA  
Tel. +1 202 682 8000 Fax. +1 202 962 4714

8 April 2002

To: Chairs of ISO/TC 67 Subcommittees and Standing Work Groups:

Re: USC Units

Dear Chairs:

As you already know from TC67's approved business plan, TC67 is a market-driven technical committee addressing the needs of the manufacturers and purchasers of exploration and production, pipeline transfer, and refining and processing equipment. Representing the world's largest industry the TC utilizes around 1000 industry experts in the preparation of its standards. The TC is striving for global acceptance of ISO standards but is finding an almost universal misunderstanding of a nomenclature requirement currently mandated in ISO documents a real barrier to meeting the TC's vision of "global standards used locally worldwide."

Last summer I approached ISO Central Secretariat on an issue that confronts our standards writers on a fairly regular basis – the presentation of US customary units. Some time later, I received a reply from Geneva. Copies of both correspondences are attached for your review.

During our recent Management Committee Meeting, the following Action Item was taken:

02MC-03: C. Stark will distribute documentation on the USC decision to the P members and SC secretariats asking for their input on this as a possible agenda item at the upcoming Executive Committee Meeting in June.

Would you please consider this issue and be prepared to discuss it at the upcoming Executive Committee meeting, scheduled for Monday, 24 June 2002, in Denver, Colorado, USA? I suspect that some subcommittees (like Subcommittee 5) are well aware of this issue and are already taking steps to incorporate the new flexibility allowed TC67 from Geneva, while this may be news to others. If you have any questions regarding this matter in advance of our June executive Committee Meeting, please feel free to contact either David Miller or me.

Sincerely,

*Cheryl Stark*

Cheryl Stark, Chair, TC 67

C: ISO/TC67 Management Committee



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21 August 2001

Mr. Mike Smith  
Director, Standards  
International Organization for Standardization  
1, Rue de Varembe  
CH-1211 Geneva 20  
Switzerland

Dear Mr. Smith:

As you already know from TC67's approved business plan, TC67 is a market-driven technical committee addressing the needs of the manufacturers and purchasers of exploration and production, pipeline transfer, and refining and processing equipment. Representing the world's largest industry the TC utilizes around 1000 industry experts in the preparation of its standards. The TC is striving for global acceptance of ISO standards but is finding an almost universal misunderstanding of a nomenclature requirement currently mandated in ISO documents a real barrier to meeting the TC's vision of "global standards used locally worldwide."

TC67 Resolution 7 (Jakarta, 1997) agreed that U.S. customary units are allowed in all TC67 documents as follows: A U.S. customary unit is denoted by enclosure in a bracket [ ] following the equivalent SI unit, with the U.S. customary unit being presented in the ISO format with a decimal comma. Several subcommittees are also including tables of U.S. customary units as annexes for informative use. The problem is that the personnel of the petroleum and natural gas industry are not familiar with a decimal comma, and therefore, as a result, choose to disregard or misinterpret the ISO document. Design questions have been identified, and the possibility of health, environmental and safety problems exist. By this petition, TC67 is trying to preempt any such HES occurrences and educate the industry personnel in SI nomenclature used within ISO documents.

TC 67 is asking for a deviation from Directives 1 for a period of ten years in the use of commas as decimal delineators, and to allow points to be used as decimal delineators in the U.S. customary units only. This deviation is requested on behalf of the all subcommittees and working groups, and the Executive and Management Committees of TC67. The acceptance of this proposal will help acquaint the industry with the SI units, develop an understanding of the breadth of ISO coverage, and smooth the transition to acceptance and widespread use of ISO standards. This issue has been discussed with the TC 12 (Quantities, units, symbols, conversion factors) secretary Mr. A. J. Thor and he is of the opinion that if Imperial units or US customary units are used the decimal point rather than the decimal comma should be used in the numerical value, that in this case the comma shall not be used to separate groups of three digits to the left or the right from the decimal sign.

ISO Technical Committee 67 “materials, equipment and offshore structures for the petroleum and natural gas industries” wishes to thank you and the ISO Technical Editing and Project Management staff for its consideration of this issue and hopes that a mutually acceptable solution can be found.

Sincerely,

*Cheryl Stark*

Cheryl Stark, Chair, TC 67

**David Miller**

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**From:** Samne Alain [samne@iso.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 17, 2001 11:53 AM  
**To:** Cheryl Stark; David Miller; Jennifer Kelly; Neil Reeve (E-mail)  
**Subject:** FW: Decimal symbol -- use of US customary units

-----Original Message-----

**From:** Goodwin Joanna [mailto:goodwin@iso.org]  
**Sent:** Monday, December 17, 2001 2:51 PM  
**To:** starkcl@bp.com  
**Cc:** SAMNE; hornfeld@iso.ch; Smith Michael; Perrad Franck; pelaprat  
**Subject:** Decimal symbol -- use of US customary units

Dear Cheryl

Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying to your letter addressed to Mr Smith of 21 August 2001 but as you are aware the issue of the decimal symbol has been the subject of some discussion, the latest of which was our recent discussion here in Geneva last month.

Without belabouring the issue any further, I am happy to announce that the arguments of TC 67 have been taken on board and that we agree to your request to use respectively the decimal comma and the decimal point for quantities expressed in SI units and US customary units in TC 67 standards. It will be the responsibility of the TC or SC (whichever is the designated owner of the standard) to ensure the correctness of all conversions and their respective units; the Central Secretariat can accept no responsibility in this area. At the same time we should like to propose what we hope is a more encompassing mechanism for reviewing the use of US customary units, which we consider would serve to ensure that we continue to respond not only to the interests of the TC 67 community but also ensure the continued fitness for purpose of individual standards in the various subdomains.

To ensure the continued market relevance and necessity of the use of the "TC 67 SI-USC unit rule" we would suggest that the deviation be granted not for a straight period of 10 years but for a period of 5 years (2002-01-01 to 2006-12-31) renewable for a further period of 5 years if the need is confirmed. Accordingly, the TC 67 secretariat is requested to reconfirm at the appropriate time the industry needs for the period 2007-01-01 to 2011-12-31 to ensure that they are indeed being fully satisfied, or if necessary to review the rule. If after the initial 5-year period it is not considered acceptable to delete entirely the US customary units, consideration should be given to their transfer to an informative annex within the document with a view to their deletion after a further 5 years. The aim to discontinue the inclusion of US customary units would thus be achieved either by 2007-01-01 or, at the latest, 2012-01-01 unless an extension to the rule were negotiated.

At the same time owing to the fact that each standard has a distinct life cycle, we need to ensure that the necessary mechanism is in place to avoid divergence between the requirements in those individual standards and the requirements as expressed by the "TC 67 SI-USC unit rule". We would propose that at the time of the periodic review of each standard (5 years after its publication, or earlier), the need for the use of the "TC 67 SI-USC unit rule" be balloted as part of the confirmation procedure. If the need were confirmed, the standard could continue to include both SI and US customary units for a further period of 5 years (or earlier if the need for review is earlier). At the end of this second 5-year period, the US customary units will be deleted, unless a further extension of the "TC 67 SI-USC unit rule" has been sought. In this way we could hope to maintain coherence of purpose amongst the complete corpus of TC 67 documents.

I hope that you will find these proposals acceptable. I have addressed this mail to you only since there were no ccs to your letter but feel free to forward it to whomever. Please don't hesitate to contact me should you consider it necessary to discuss further this issue (although I should add that I will be absent until mid-January).

Best wishes for the festive season.

Jo Goodwin