

Understanding Patent Issues During IEEE Standards Development

Patented technology in IEEE standards

This guide offers information concerning the IEEE Standards Association and its patent policies but does not state the patent policy. Definitive statements of the IEEE Standard Associations' policies and procedures concerning patents can be found in the [IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws](#) and the [IEEE-SA Standards Board Operations Manual](#).

A [complete package of patent-related materials](#) is available. This package includes all the documentation you need to comply with the IEEE Standards Association policy concerning essential patents. A flowchart with additional guidance on the methodologies used by the IEEE-SA Standards Board Patent Committee is part of this [package](#). If you include patented technology in your standard, then you may have incorporated an essential patent.

1. *What is an Essential Patent Claim?*

~~The IEEE patent policy addresses use of Essential Patent Claims.~~ An Essential Patent Claim means any Patent Claim [(including claims in issued patent(s) or pending patent application(s))] the use of which was necessary to create a compliant implementation of either mandatory or optional portions of the normative clauses of the [Proposed] IEEE Standard when, at the time of the [Proposed] IEEE Standard's approval, there was no commercially and technically feasible non-infringing alternative. An Essential Patent Claim does not include any Patent Claim that was essential only for Enabling Technology or any claim other than that set forth above even if contained in the same patent as the Essential Patent Claim. See clause 6.1 of the IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws available at <http://standards.ieee.org/guides/bylaws/sect6-7.html#6>.

2. *Does the IEEE determine whether a patent is essential when seeking a Letter of Assurance?*

No.

Call for essential patents claims at IEEE standards developing meetings

3. *What is a call for patents?*

A call for patents is a reminder made by the chair, or the chair's designee, at an IEEE standards developing meeting. The chair or the chair's designee informs the participants that if any individual believes that Patent Claims might be Essential Patent Claims, that fact should be made known to the entire working group and duly recorded in the minutes of the working group meeting.

4. *How often should a Working Group Chair issue a call for potential Essential Patent Claims?*

A Working Group Chair or his or her designee shall issue the call at every Working Group meeting. If the Working Group does not meet face to face or telephonically, the Working Group should be issued a call via e-mail or letter on a regular basis. It is strongly

recommended that the IEEE Patent Committee-developed slide set be used. These slides are available from <http://standards.ieee.org/board/pat/pat-slideset.ppt>. Note that a call for patents shall be made at every standards developing meeting. This includes, but is not limited to, working group, task force and study group meetings.

5. *Our group gathers for several days during a single week. Does the chair have to announce the policy every day?*

The Working Group Chair or his or her designee shall issue the call at every Working Group meeting. If a group is “meeting” for consecutive days and the attendance is substantially the same for each day of the gathering, the policy only needs to be read once. If the chair plans not to read or display the policy each day, then the chair must either (a) ensure that the policy or a URL for it has been sent out to all attendees prior to the meeting (and is available in the registration packet for any on-site registrants), or (b) announce each day that the meeting is subject to the patent policy as read or displayed on the first day. Note, though, that this rule applies separately to each “group” that is “meeting” during the week. For example, if a working group holds a meeting during the same week as its task group, task force, and/or study group, the chair of each of those groups must read or display the policy at the beginning of that group’s first day of “meeting.”

6. *What if a group meets telephonically?*

If the Working Group meets telephonically, you can send the slides in an email to the participants in advance of the call, or include a link in the meeting announcement. The chair must then ask at the start of the call whether there is anybody participating that has not read the policy. If someone says they have not, then the chair must either (a) read the policy aloud, or (b) send the policy or URL electronically and pause the call until all participants have read the policy.

7. *What if the group does not meet either in person or by telephone – for example, the group “meets” only through email or chat rooms?*

If the group does not meet face to face or telephonically, the chair of the group should issue the call for patents via e-mail or letter on a regular basis.

Letter of Assurance

~~5.8.~~What is a Letter of Assurance?

In general, a letter of assurance is a document stating a Submitter’s position with respect to ownership, enforcement or licensing of an Essential Patent Claim that may be incorporated into a specifically referenced IEEE Standard. The specific requirements for an IEEE Letter of Assurance are defined in clause 6.1 of the IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws available at <http://standards.ieee.org/guides/bylaws/sect6-7.html#6>.

~~6.9.~~When does the IEEE send out a request for a Letter of Assurance?

The Working Group Chair or, where appropriate, the Sponsor Chair will send out a request for a Letter of Assurance whenever the Chair is notified, at any time and by any means, that the [Proposed] IEEE Standard may require the use of a potential Essential Patent Claim.

7.10. *How will a participant know if the IEEE has accepted a Letter of Assurance?*

Accepted Letters of Assurance can be found on the IEEE-SA's web site at <http://standards.ieee.org/board/pat/pat-material.html>.

8.11. *What happens if the IEEE has not received assurances regarding all potential Essential Patent Claims incorporated in a [Proposed] IEEE Standard?*

If the IEEE is aware of a potential Essential Patent Claim and no corresponding Letter of Assurance has been received, the matter will be referred to the IEEE Patent Committee through the PatCom Administrator. The IEEE Patent Committee will review the circumstances and make a recommendation to the IEEE-SA Standards Board. The IEEE-SA ~~is extremely unlikely to will not~~ approve a standard that includes the known use of an Essential Patent Claim ~~or a serious risk of claims based on potential Essential Patent Claims without an Accepted Letter of Assurance.~~

9.12. *How should Working Groups handle existing Letters of Assurances provided to IEEE when developing an amendment, corrigendum, edition or revision of the particular standard referenced in the Letter of Assurance?*

An Accepted Letter of Assurance referencing an existing standard, amendment, corrigendum, edition, or revision will remain in force for the application of the Essential Patent Claim(s) to the technology specified in another amendment, corrigendum, edition, or revision of the same IEEE Standard but only if (a) the application of the technology required by the amendment, corrigendum, edition, or revision of the same IEEE Standard has not changed from its previous usage and (b) the same Essential Patent Claims covered by the prior Accepted Letter of Assurance remain Essential Patent Claims in the same IEEE Standard or revision thereof. The Working Group Chair shall initiate a request for a new Letter of Assurance from a known Submitter when re-using portions of or technologies specified in an existing [Proposed] IEEE Standard, amendment, corrigendum, edition, or revision referenced in an Accepted Letter of Assurance in a different [Proposed] IEEE Standard.

Participants notification of IEEE of Essential Patent Claims

10.13. *What obligation do individual participants have to notify the IEEE if they own or their employer owns potential Essential Patent Claims incorporated by a [Proposed] IEEE Standard? What if they are uncertain whether a Patent Claim they own or their employer owns is essential?*

Individual participants of a call for patents are required to notify the IEEE of the identity of a holder of any potential Essential Patent Claims (but not the identity of the Essential Patent Claim) where (1) the individual participant is personally aware that the holder may have a potential Essential Patent Claim; (2) the holder is the participant or an entity the participant is

from, employed by or otherwise represents; and (3) the potential Essential Patent Claim is not already the subject of any existing Letter of Assurance. If such a participant is uncertain whether the patent is essential, the participant still shall notify the IEEE (or cause the IEEE to be notified) of the possibility because they are personally aware of a claim that is a *potential* Essential Patent Claim.

11.14. *How do I find out if a particular company has submitted a Letter of Assurance?*

Accepted Letter of Assurances are listed on the IEEE-SA's web site at <http://standards.ieee.org/board/pat/pat-material.html>. Letters of Assurance accepted after 1 January 2007 will be posted on the website as they are received and Letters of Assurance received prior to that date will be posted over time.

12.15. *What are example means by which an individual participant can notify the IEEE (or cause the IEEE to be notified) that his or her employer is the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim incorporated by a [Proposed] IEEE Standard? Does the individual participant need to identify the Essential Patent Claim specifically?*

An individual participant could tell the Working Group Chair that his or her employer is the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim. Alternatively, the participant could request that his or her employer submit a Letter of Assurance or otherwise notify the IEEE that it is the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim. In that case, the participant fulfills his or her duty to the IEEE only if his or her employer submits a Letter of Assurance or otherwise notifies the IEEE that it is the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim. If the employer declines to submit a Letter of Assurance or otherwise notify the IEEE, the participant will have to tell the Working Group Chair that his or her employer may be the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim. In all cases the duty on the participant is only to inform the IEEE of the identity of the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim and not the patent, application or particular claim itself.

13.16. *Do participants have to notify IEEE of third party patent holders? For these purposes, "third party" means a person other than the participant or an entity the participant is from, employed by, or otherwise represents.*

Participants are not required to notify the IEEE that they are aware of any potential Essential Patent Claims held by a third party. Participants may make such disclosure at their own discretion. Individual participants of a call for patents should notify the IEEE if they are aware of a potential Essential Patent Claim held by a third party. Although there is no obligation to notify the IEEE of third party patent holders, the IEEE encourages participants to provide such notice and expects that they will normally do so to do so. This encouragement is particularly strong as the third party may not be a participant in the standards process.

14.17. *What duty does an individual participant have to the IEEE if a participant's employer owns a potential Essential Patent Claim but the individual participant doesn't have personal knowledge of such claim?*

As noted in the answer to question ~~1310~~, a participant only needs to notify the IEEE of a potential Essential Patent Claim if such ~~member~~participant is “personally aware” that his or her employer has a potential Essential Patent Claim. There is no duty for that employee (or anyone else in his or her organization) to conduct a patent search, but the IEEE-SA does expect that participants will conduct themselves in good faith. This expectation arises both from the IEEE Code of Ethics and from the background legal rules. The Ethics Code makes clear, for example, that ~~member~~participants “accept responsibility in making decisions consistent with the safety, health and welfare of the public.” Similarly, the U.S. Supreme Court stated in the Allied Tube case that SDOs operate based on “the merits of objective expert judgments” using “procedures that prevent the standard-setting process from being biased by members with economic interests in stifling product competition.” Consequently, while (again) the policy does not require a patent search, the IEEE does encourage each participant to make sufficient inquiry to satisfy him or herself that s/he is not being deliberately shielded from relevant knowledge and that the employer does not have any potential Essential Patent Claim.

~~15-18.~~ *Can an individual participate in standards development activities if his or her employer is unwilling to submit a Letter of Assurance once requested or provide the assurance indicated in the patent policy in a Letter of Assurance?*

Yes. As long as the participant complies with the requirement that he or she notify the IEEE that his or her employer is the holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim if the participant is personally aware that his or her employer is such a holder, the individual can continue to participate in standards development activities. See also question ~~1512~~.

~~16-19.~~ *Does the IEEE patent policy require participants or their employers to make an assurance or submit a Letter of Assurance?*

No. Submission of a Letter of Assurance is not a precondition to participation. Participants do have a duty to inform the IEEE if they or an entity they are from, employed by or otherwise represents holds Essential Patent Claims. See questions ~~1310~~, ~~1613~~ and ~~1815~~ for more information.

~~17-20.~~ *Is the IEEE’s patent policy a “disclosure” policy?*

No. The IEEE’s patent policy is a policy of assurance as further described in these frequently asked questions, not a policy of disclosure.

~~18-21.~~ *What does a participant’s employer need to do to determine whether it has any potential Essential Patent Claims when it receives a request from the IEEE for a Letter of Assurance? Specifically,*

(a) *Does the employer need to do a patent search?*

No. The policy expressly states that there is no duty to conduct a patent search; but the employer may do so if it wishes.

(b) *Does the employer need to talk to every person they have sent to the Working Group?*

When the employer receives the request for a Letter of Assurance, the employer can state its licensing position with respect to any Patent Claims that might be or become Essential Patent Claims relating to the particular standard referenced in the Letter of Assurance. In the alternative, the employer can indicate that it is not aware of any Patent Claims that the employer may own, control, or have the ability to license that might be or become Essential Patent Claims, but *only if*, the employer does a Reasonable and Good Faith Inquiry to determine the existence of any such Patent Claims. As described in clause 6.1 of the Bylaws, a “Reasonable and Good Faith Inquiry” includes, but is not limited to, the employer using reasonable efforts to identify and contact those individuals who are from, employed by or otherwise represent the employer and who are known to the employer to be current or past participants in the development process of the [Proposed] IEEE Standard identified in the Letter of Assurance, including, but not limited to, participation in a Sponsor Ballot or Working Group. If the Submitter did not or does not have any participants, then a “Reasonable and Good Faith Inquiry” may include, but is not limited to, the Submitter using reasonable efforts to contact individuals who are from, employed by, or represent the Submitter and who the Submitter believes are most likely to have knowledge about the technology covered by the [Proposed] IEEE Standard. As described above, the employer only needs to engage in a Reasonable and Good Faith Inquiry if it wants to avoid providing an assurance based on its assertion that it is not aware of any Patent Claims that the employer may own, control, or have the ability to license that might be or become Essential Patent Claims. IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws available at <http://standards.ieee.org/guides/bylaws/sect6-7.html#6>.

Submitting a Letter of Assurance

~~19.22.~~ *Do the terms "potential Essential Patent Claims" and "Patent Claims that the Submitter may own, control or have the ability to license . . . " include claims described in patent applications?*

Yes. The definition of Patent Claims includes pending patent applications.

~~20.23.~~ *At what point should the Letter of Assurance be submitted?*

The IEEE encourages the submission of a Letter of Assurance as soon as reasonably feasible in the standards development process.

~~21.24.~~ *Who should submit a Letter of Assurance?*

The IEEE will request licensing assurance on the IEEE-SA Standards Board approved Letter of Assurance form from any person upon being notified that a [Proposed] IEEE Standard may require the use of a potential Essential Patent Claim. Although the IEEE encourages any person receiving a request for assurance to submit the Letter of Assurance, the IEEE may not use any coercion in requesting the assurance. This means the IEEE cannot require that a person submit a Letter of Assurance or provide a particular assurance with respect to

ownership, enforcement or licensing of an Essential Patent Claim in order to participate in an IEEE standards development activity.

Additionally, a Submitter of a Letter of Assurance is required to submit a Letter of Assurance if, after providing a Letter of Assurance to the IEEE, the Submitter of the Letter of Assurance becomes aware of additional Patent Claim(s) not already covered by an existing Letter of Assurance as further described in the answer to question [2623](#). Anyone who believes that he, she, or it holds a potential Essential Patent Claim is encouraged to submit a Letter of Assurance, even if not specifically requested to do so.

[22.25.](#) *Who should sign a Letter of Assurance?*

Only a person who is authorized to sign and bind the Submitter and its covered Affiliates to the assurance shall sign the Letter of Assurance . Unless the Letter of Assurance is received from an individual who has clear authority for intellectual property and legal matters, the IEEE Patent Committee Administrator will send a certified letter, return receipt requested, to the General Counsel or other appropriate representative of the Submitter to confirm receipt of the Letter of Assurance and to ensure that the Letter of Assurance was submitted by an appropriate individual.

[23.26.](#) *What duty does a Submitter have to provide an additional assurance if it becomes aware of additional Essential Patent Claims not already covered by an existing Letter of Assurance?*

As further described in Section 6.2 of the Bylaws, the Submitter of a Letter of Assurance is required to submit a Letter of Assurance if, after providing a Letter of Assurance to the IEEE, the Submitter of the Letter of Assurance becomes aware of additional Patent Claim(s) that are not already covered by an existing Letter of Assurance and that are owned, controlled, or licensable by the Submitter that may be or may become Essential Patent Claim(s) for the same IEEE Standard. The Submitter is deemed to be “aware” of such additional potential Essential Patent Claims if any of the following individuals who are from, employed by, or otherwise represent the Submitter have personal knowledge of such claims: (a) past or present participants in the development of the [Proposed] IEEE Standard; or (b) the individual executing the previously submitted Letter of Assurance.

[24.27.](#) *Can the Letter of Assurance form be modified?*

No. Use of the standard-form Letter of Assurance is now mandatory. Completing the form is not considered a modification.

[25.28.](#) *What happens when a Letter of Assurance is not Accepted?*

The Submitter will be informed by the PatCom Administrator that the Letter of Assurance was not accepted and why it was not accepted.

[26.29.](#) *Are attachments part of the Accepted Letter of Assurance?*

Yes. See also question [3734](#) and [3835](#).

Who can enforce the Accepted Letter of Assurance?

Users and implementers may seek to enforce the terms of any Accepted Letter of Assurance. In certain circumstances and at its sole discretion, the IEEE may also seek to enforce the Accepted Letter of Assurance terms.

Affiliates

[27.30.](#) *Who is an Affiliate?*

An Affiliate is an entity that directly or indirectly, through one or more intermediaries controls the Submitter, is controlled by the Submitter, or is under common control with the Submitter. For the purposes of this definition, the term “control” and its derivatives, with respect to for-profit entities, means the legal, beneficial or equitable ownership, directly or indirectly, or more than fifty percent (50%) of the capital stock (or other ownership interest, if not a corporation) of an entity ordinarily having voting rights. “Control” and its derivatives, with respect to nonprofit entities, means the power to elect or appoint more than fifty percent (50%) of the Board of Directors of an entity. See clause 6.1 of the IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws available at <http://standards.ieee.org/guides/bylaws/sect6-7.html#6>. For example, the parent corporation of a Submitter, any brother or sister corporation of the Submitter and any Submitter subsidiary in which the Submitter owns more than 50% are considered Affiliates.

[28.31.](#) *Does the Letter of Assurance bind Affiliates?*

Yes, other than those Affiliates explicitly excluded in a Letter of Assurance.

Application of LOA to successors of Essential Patent Claims covered by LOA

[29.32.](#) *What does the Submitter of a Letter of Assurance have to do if the Submitter transfers one or more Essential Patent Claims covered by the Letter of Assurance to a third party?*

The Submitter of a Letter of Assurance is required to provide notice of the Letter of Assurance to any assignee or transferee of any Essential Patent Claims covered by the Letter of Assurance. That notice can be provided by notifying the assignee or transferee that the Essential Patent Claims are subject to an accepted Letter of Assurance or by a general statement in the transfer or assignment agreement that the Essential Patent Claims being transferred or assigned are subject to any encumbrances that may exist as of the effective date or such agreement. For example, a Submitter could include a provision like the following in its purchase agreement:

“One or more of the assets being transferred are subject to encumbrances that may exist as of the Effective Date of the Purchase Agreement.”

1 In addition, the Submitter shall require that the assignee or transferee agree to provide the
2 same notice to any subsequent assignees or transferees and require its subsequent assignees
3 or transferees to do the same.

4 *Hypothetical.* Company A submits a Letter of Assurance for an Essential Patent Claim for
5 IEEE Standard X which is accepted by the IEEE-SA. Two years after submitting the Letter
6 of Assurance, Company A sells all of its assets to Company B, including the Essential Patent
7 Claim. Three years later, Company B sells the Essential Patent Claim to Company C.
8 Subsequently, Company C sells the Essential Patent Claim to Company D but does not
9 provide the required notice to Company D.

10 (a) Company A's Obligations

11 Company A can fulfill its obligations to the IEEE-SA one of two ways:

- 12 ✓ Company A can notify Company B that the Essential Patent Claim is subject to an
13 accepted Letter of Assurance; or
- 14 ✓ Company A can provide a statement in its purchase agreement with Company B that one
15 or more of the assets being transferred may be subject to any encumbrances that may
16 exist as of the effective date of such agreement.

17 Regardless of which path it takes, Company A also must require that Company B agree to
18 provide the same notice to its assignees or transferees and to bind those assignees or
19 transferees to provide the same notice.

20 (b) Company B's Obligations

21 Company B can fulfill its obligations to the IEEE-SA one of two ways:

- 22 ✓ Company B can notify Company C that the Essential Patent Claim is subject to an
23 accepted Letter of Assurance; or
- 24 ✓ Company B can provide a statement in its purchase agreement with Company C that one
25 or more of the assets being transferred may be subject to any encumbrances that may
26 exist as of the effective date of such agreement.

27 Regardless of which path it takes, Company B also must require that Company C agree to
28 provide the same notice to its assignees or transferees and to bind those assignees or
29 transferees to provide the same notice.

30 (c) Company C's Obligations

31 Company C must agree to provide the same notice to its assignees or transferees and to bind
32 those assignees or transferees to provide the same notice as described in (a) and (b) above. In
33 this case, Company C did not provide the required notice to Company D in breach of its
34 agreement with Company B. However, as long as Company B required that Company C
35 provide the required notice to Company D, Company B has fulfilled its commitment under

the Letter of Assurance. Although Company B may decide not seek to enforce its agreement with Company C, users and implementers could sue Company C for its failure to provide the required notice to Company D.

~~30.33.~~ *If a Submitter transfers one or more Essential Patent Claims that may be covered by a Letter of Assurance, what commitment does it need to get from the transferee regarding the Letter of Assurance?*

See answer to question ~~3229~~.

~~31.34.~~ *Does the Submitter have any responsibility to ensure that its assignees and transferees provide notice of the Letter of Assurance to subsequent transferees?*

No. As long as the Submitter provides the required notice to its assignees and transferee and requires that its assignees and transferees agree to provide the required notice and bind its assignees and transferees to the same, the Submitter is not responsible for the actions of any downstream assignees and transferees.

Licensing terms provided with Letters of Assurance

~~32.35.~~ *A Submitter of a Letter of Assurance is permitted to provide a not-to-exceed license fee or rate commitment. What is the purpose of permitting a Submitter to provide a not-to-exceed license fee or rate commitment?*

The purpose of the policy is to facilitate the development of standards that will serve the interests of industry, the government, and the public. Relative costs of implementation for different proposed technical approaches in comparison with the relative technical performance increases or decreases of those proposals is a legitimate topic for discussion and a legitimate basis for decision-making in the standards development process. The new policy ~~attempts to~~ permits participants ~~to have~~with greater certainty and precision in their understanding of relative costs.

~~33.36.~~ *Is a Submitter of a Letter of Assurance required to provide a not-to-exceed license fee or rate commitment?*

No. The IEEE-SA permits, but does not require, the Submitter to provide not-to-exceed royalty rates or other terms.

~~34.37.~~ *Does the IEEE make a judgment about whether any terms provided with the Letter of Assurance are reasonable or non-discriminatory?*

No. The IEEE is not responsible for identifying Essential Patent Claims for which a license may be required, for conducting inquiries into the legal validity or scope of those Essential Patent Claims, or for determining whether any licensing terms or conditions are reasonable or non-discriminatory. Acceptance of a Letter of Assurance does not imply that the IEEE has made any determination of the reasonableness of the foregoing.

35.38. *What is the meaning of "reasonable rates" and "reasonable terms and conditions"?*

As noted in the answer to question 3734, the IEEE-SA takes no position on, and has no responsibility for determining, the reasonableness of disclosed royalty rates or other licensing terms and conditions. The IEEE-SA's Acceptance of a Letter of Assurance does not imply any finding that the disclosed not-to-exceed terms are or are not reasonable. The IEEE-SA's approval of a standard does not imply any finding (in the case of a standard for which not-to-exceed terms have been disclosed) that such terms are or are not reasonable or any finding (in the case of a standard for which not-to-exceed terms were not disclosed) that reasonable terms would be greater or lesser than the disclosed maximum terms (if any) for any other technology.

36.39. *The policy says that "copies of an Accepted Letter of Assurance may be provided to the Working Group, but shall not be discussed, at any standards Working Group meeting."*

a) Can copies of accepted Letter of Assurances be handed out at a standards development meeting?

Yes. A participant may provide an Accepted Letter of Assurance to other participants by handing out paper copies of an Accepted Letter of Assurance (including a copy of the accepted license or material licensing terms, if provided as part of the Letter of Assurance) or a datafile with an image of the Accepted Letter of Assurance as it resides on the IEEE website.

b) Can the link to the IEEE website for an accepted Letter of Assurance be provided?

Providing or displaying the IEEE URL for an accepted Letter of Assurance is also acceptable.

c) Can the actual accepted Letter of Assurance be displayed on a screen?

Yes, but it is not recommended. Given that the The Letter of Assurance consists of three pages of often very small type, it is not recommended that the image of an accepted Letter of Assurance be displayed. The problem is that tTherefore, the display is not going to be useful legible except in the smallest of rooms. However, displaying it is not a violation of the patent policy provided a participant does not read aloud, present or answer questions about the displayed Letter of Assurance; the problem is that it might not be fully legible, and thatThe lack of legibility may lead to impermissible questions or discussion. Nevertheless, displaying the Letter of Assurance is not a violation of the patent policy provided a participant does not read aloud, present or answer questions about the displayed Letter of Assurance

d) Can a participant make a presentation or answer questions about the not-to-exceed license fee or rate, material licensing terms, sample license agreement?

No, except that using one or more not-to-exceed rates as components in a presentation comparing relative costs is acceptable. Further information can be found in "What You Need to Know About The IEEE Standards Association's Antitrust and Competition Policy."

e) What can standards development groups discuss about Letters of Assurance or submitted license terms?

Nothing, other than distribution of the Letter of Assurance as described in FAQ 3936(a) above. In addition, using one or more not-to-exceed rates as components in a presentation comparing relative costs is acceptable. Further information can be found in "What You Need to Know About The IEEE Standards Association's Antitrust and Competition Policy."

f) Doesn't it make sense to discuss license terms as part of an overall evaluation of a proposed technology?

~~Nothing, other than distribution of the Letter of Assurance as described in FAQ 36(a) above. In addition, using one or more not to exceed rates as components in a presentation comparing relative costs is acceptable. Further information can be found in "What You Need to Know About The IEEE Standards Association's Antitrust and Competition Policy."~~

IEEE-SA standards development meetings consist primarily of engineers who are there primarily to discuss the technical merits of competing solutions. Some knowledge of relative cost is entirely appropriate, and the policy provides for exactly that. But licensing issues can be complex and involve not just technical issues but legal and business issues as well, and those discussions can require a different set of people than are present for the technical meetings.

gf) What do I do if the standards development group launches into a discussion of patent licensing terms?

A participant should object to, and a Working Group Chair shall close down, any discussion that is not permitted under IEEE-SA policies.

hg) What should the chair do if a participant wants to modify the terms of an Accepted Letter of Assurance during the meeting?

An Accepted Letter of Assurance cannot be modified, either in the meeting or elsewhere. Anyone who wishes to submit an additional Letter of Assurance may do so (although any previous Accepted Letters of Assurance will continue to be available). The chair should instruct the individual to submit a new Letter of Assurance as provided in the IEEE-SA Standards Board Operations Manual. See also response to question ~~4239~~.

ih) What about conversations in the hallway? Can participants discuss the particulars of license terms there?

-The IEEE-SA regulates what goes on in forums that the IEEE-SA provides, such as meeting rooms and email reflectors. The IEEE-SA has no ability to regulate purely private conduct of its participants. There are some topics that participants should not discuss regardless of

where they are (such as prices that each of them as competitors will charge for compliant products). There are other topics that participants shall not discuss in IEEE-SA forums and shall not discuss in immediately adjacent spaces that might reasonably lead outside observers to believe it is just a continuation of the formal meeting. Further information can be found in "What You Need to Know About The IEEE Standards Association's Antitrust and Competition Policy."

ji) If a Letter of Assurance is submitted without the Submitter's having exercised the option of providing a not-to-exceed license fee or rate commitment or other license terms, is it O.K. for a Working Group member/participant to request or encourage the Submitter to file an amended Letter of Assurance to provide that information?

No. ~~The policy makes clear that submission of not to exceed terms is entirely voluntary and no Submitter shall be coerced into disclosing not to exceed terms. Although Consequently, although a~~ relative costs comparisons can certainly note the absence of cost information, ~~participants shall not (albeit without singling out any particular Submitter or Letter of Assurance), the IEEE-SA does not permit participants to request license fees, rates, terms, or~~ conditions during ~~technical standards development~~ meetings or ~~in through~~ other IEEE-SA forums ~~for technical discussions~~ (such as email reflectors).

kj) What can be discussed about patents in a standards development group meeting or in an IEEE-SA email reflector?

You can discuss the technical merits of using the technology included even if it is included within a potential Essential Patent Claim. You can discuss and compare the relative costs of technology claimed in potential Essential Patent Claims. You must not discuss subjects such as how a patent should be licensed, or essentiality, validity, or interpretation of a patent claim. These are not appropriate topics for discussion in a standards developing committee. Further information can be found in "What You Need to Know About IEEE Standards and the Law."

37.40. *Can someone submit a different Letter of Assurance for different Essential Patent Claims within the same standard?*

Yes. A Submitter may submit separate Letters of Assurance providing different licensing positions for different potential Essential Patent Claims.

38.41. *If a person submits a Letter of Assurance but doesn't identify a specific Essential Patent Claim covered by the Letter of Assurance, are the assurances binding on all of the Essential Patent Claims owned by the Submitter's company?*

Yes.

39.42. *Can a Submitter change the terms of the assurance it has given after it has been accepted by the IEEE? For example, what if the Submitter decided to lower the not to exceed price it would offer a license for an Essential Patent Claim?*

A Letter of Assurance is irrevocable once submitted and accepted and shall apply, at a minimum, from the date of the standard's approval to the date of the standard's withdrawal. Thus, a Submitter cannot change the terms of the Letter of Assurance for a particular Essential Patent Claim once it is accepted. However, over time, a Submitter may provide multiple assurances for a given Essential Patent Claim by submitting multiple Letters of Assurance for such claim, each of which shall be binding on the Submitter. Each potential licensee may choose to invoke the terms of any applicable Letter of Assurance accepted by the IEEE. Thus, the Submitter desiring to lower the not to exceed price the Submitter would offer a license for an Essential Patent Claim can submit an additional Letter of Assurance with the revised not to exceed price and each potential licensee may choose to invoke the terms of either Letter of Assurance.

Blanket Letter of Assurance

40.43. *What is a “blanket Letter of Assurance”?*

A Blanket Letter of Assurance is a Letter of Assurance referencing a standard or project that applies to all Essential Patent Claims for which a Submitter may currently or in the future (except as otherwise provided for in these Bylaws and in the IEEE-SA Standards Board Operations Manual) have the ability to license. This is defined in clause 6.1 of the IEEE-SA Standards Board Bylaws available at <http://standards.ieee.org/guides/bylaws/sect6-7.html#6>.

41.44. *What happens if the Submitter submits a Blanket Letter of Assurance after previously offering a specific Letter of Assurance?*

If a Submitter has signed and submitted a Letter of Assurance specifically identifying an Essential Patent Claim before or concurrently with signing and submitting a Blanket Letter of Assurance, the Blanket Letter of Assurance cannot be invoked as to the specified Patent Claim.

42.45. *Does a Blanket Letter of Assurance apply to Essential Patent Claims that my company acquires after submitting the Letter of Assurance?*

Yes, unless the acquired entity or the prior holder of the acquired Essential Patent Claim has submitted a Letter of Assurance before the acquisition. Any Blanket Letter of Assurance submitted by the acquired entity or the prior holder of the acquired Essential Patent Claim before the acquisition shall continue to apply to acquired Essential Patent Claims covered by such assurance (but not to the acquirer's Essential Patent Claims). An acquiring party can ask a seller of an acquired Essential Patent Claim or an acquired entity to submit additional Letters of Assurance before closing of the acquisition.

Implementation of new policy

43.46. *What is the effective date of the new patent policy?*

The effective date of the new patent policy set forth in the IEEE-SA Bylaws, Operations Manual and form Letter of Assurance is 30 April 2007.

[44.47.](#) *Will the new policy apply to existing standards development projects currently underway as well as new standards development projects?*

As has long been the practice for all IEEE-SA Bylaws and Operations Manual changes, changes to policy will go into effect for all Working Groups at the same time. This is usually 1 January of each year but the IEEE-SA Board of Governors set the effective date of these changes to be 30 April 2007. Of course, any Letters of Assurance for a Standard/Project Number received before 30 April 2007 are honored, i.e., there is no need for a Working Group Chair to request a Letter of Assurance on the new form from a holder of a potential Essential Patent Claim if the holder has already submitted an accepted Letter of Assurance.

[45.48.](#) *Can a participant provide a not-to-exceed license fee or rate commitment after 30 April 2007 for a Letter of Assurance that was submitted to the IEEE-SA prior to 30 April 2007?*

Letters of Assurance are irrevocable once submitted and accepted. However, after 30 April 2007, a holder that has already submitted an accepted Letter of Assurance may submit a subsequent letter on the new Letter of Assurance form if it wants to update the information on the previously submitted Letter of Assurance. In such a case, a potential licensee would have the right to invoke the terms of either Letter of Assurance. See also answer to question [4239](#).