NVLAP®	**DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE** National Institute of Standards and Technology National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program	**ISSUE DATE:** May 27, 2020
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		LAP: TIM

SUBJECT: Temporary use of remote assessments for the performance of ISO/IEC 17025 assessments within the NVLAP TIM LAP

The purpose of this bulletin is to introduce a temporary, alternative solution for conducting onsite assessment activities during a period of implemented travel restrictions.

This bulletin is in effect until further notice and will be reviewed regularly, and updated as necessary, in accordance with changes to local, state, and Federal directives.

ISO/IEC 17011:2017, Section 3.26 defines a remote assessment as an "assessment of the physical location or virtual site of a laboratory using electronic means."

The TIM LAP's process for conducting onsite assessment activities are found in NIST HB 150 Section 3 and NIST HB 150-15 Section 3. A remote assessment process is in place for those labs in which a renewal onsite assessment is not possible within an anticipated timeframe. The TIM program manager has determined that remote assessments are not appropriate at this time for use in conducting initial assessments.

The TIM program manager has determined that a remote assessment is appropriate for the review of the management system and the transition of the accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 for laboratories in good standing. Due to the many different test methods in thermal insulation materials testing and the wide range of equipment in use, a remote assessment is not adequate for assessing test methods or scope additions. The TIM program manager may determine that a remote assessment is not appropriate for a particular laboratory based upon previous assessment findings, adverse actions taken against the laboratory, or other past actions that may indicate the laboratory requires a higher level of review than what is afforded by a remote assessment. In this case, the TIM program manager will notify the laboratory of this decision.

A laboratory undergoing a remote assessment of its management system will be required to undergo an onsite assessment of technical methods once travel permits.

Laboratories are expected to respond to any and all findings of the remote assessment within 30 days of the assessment. Once all responses are determined to be acceptable, a laboratory will gain accreditation to ISO/IEC 17025:2017 if not previously accredited to the 2017 revision. The assessment status will be placed on hold until the onsite assessment of testing can take place. The laboratory will then have 30 days to respond to any and all additional findings. Once all findings have been resolved the assessment process will be considered closed.

NVLAP does not provide the platform for conducting remote assessments.

Specific Considerations:

1. The laboratory shall have appropriate capabilities to coordinate and conduct the remote assessment, such as appropriate internet access and bandwidth, software, and audio/visual equipment.

2. Prior to the remote assessment, the laboratory should verify remote assessment capabilities with the assessor. This verification includes checking for sufficient bandwidth, software platform interoperability, access to necessary management documents, audio/video performance, and ability to utilize the audio/video set up for technical observation.

3. The assessor shall be granted access to the level of documentation that would be afforded during a normal onsite assessment.

4. If the laboratory is unable to support a remote assessment for any reason, or the assessor is unable to evaluate the laboratory's compliance to the accreditation requirements, the accreditation of the laboratory may not be renewed until an onsite assessment can be performed.

5. The laboratory is responsible for any additional expenses associated with the remote assessment, such as teleconference, webinar, and audio/visual fees, etc.

Assessors Deliverables:

The assessor's reporting deliverables are unchanged for remote assessments and will be transmitted to the lab for signature and uploaded into the NIWS Portal.