	DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE National Institute of Standards and Technology National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program	**ISSUE DATE:** June 4, 2020
	LAB BULLETIN	**NUMBER:** LB-128-2020
		LAP: ECT
SUBJECT: Updated temporary use of remote assessments for the performance of ISO/IEC 17025 assessments within the NVLAP ECT 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. The allowance of remote assessments for various testing activities may be impacted based upon regulatory guidelines.

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 ECT LAP's normal process for conducting onsite assessment activities is found in NIST Handbook 150 and NIST Handbook 150-11. A remote assessment is now a temporary option for those labs in which a renewal onsite assessment is not currently possible. The ECT program management has determined that at this time, remote assessments are not appropriate for use in conducting initial assessments.

The ECT program management determines the appropriateness of a remote assessment on a case-by-case basis. A remote assessment may be used in lieu of the onsite assessment, or to complement an onsite assessment scheduled to occur at a future date, based on the nature of the testing activities. The ECT program management may also determine when a remote assessment is not appropriate based upon payment status, past assessment history, scope expansion requests, etc.

The process of conducting the assessment can be discussed with your program manager and/or assessor(s). NVLAP does not provide remote assessment video-conferencing platforms (such as Zoom, Google Hangouts, Microsoft Teams, etc.) and should be arranged directly between the assessor and the laboratory.

Specific requirements and considerations for conducting a remote assessment

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

2. Prior to the remote assessment the lab should verify remote assessment capabilities with the assessor. This includes checking for enough bandwidth, software platform interoperability, access to necessary management documents, and audio/video performance.

3. The assessors 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 lab's compliance to the accreditation requirements, those sections unable to be evaluated will be subject to an onsite assessment.

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

Evaluation of testing activities

While the evaluation of testing activities is certainly the most challenging aspect of the remote assessment, the use of live-streaming, video recordings, document/procedure review, and laboratory staff interviews are tools that may be used to determine compliance to test methods. If specific test methods or technical activities are unable to be reviewed during the remote assessment, a follow up onsite assessment will be arranged at the appropriate time.

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

If your laboratory is scheduled for an upcoming onsite assessment, NVLAP and/or the assessor will be contacting your laboratory to discuss the possibility of the remote assessment.

Please contact your program manager for any additional questions.