



## APPROPRIATE USE AND REPORTING OF NIST TEST REPORT NUMBERS

Many customers have inquired as to the use of NIST test report numbers. This is an age-old practice that has no basis in any quality standard and their reporting has been suspended by most calibration facilities. **The reporting of a “NIST number” does not provide evidence that the measurement value is traceable.** This has been addressed by the metrology community as follows:

### **National Conference of Standards Laboratories (NCSL) Position Statement 96-1:**

“It is the position of the National Conference of Standards Laboratories (NCSL) that:

Test report numbers issued by the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) of the United States Department of Commerce are intended to be used solely for administrative purposes. Although they are often used to uniquely identify documents which bear evidence of traceability, test report numbers should not be used nor required as proof of the adequacy or traceability of a test or measurement.

It should be noted that nationally and internationally recognized standards dealing with test and measurement quality requirements such as ANSI/NCSL Z540-1-1994, ISO 10012, ISO 17025:2005 and the ISO 9000 series do not require the use or reporting of NIST Test Report Numbers to establish traceability. A definition of traceability appears in the International Vocabulary of Basic and General terms in Metrology, 1993, Section 6.10.”<sup>1</sup>

### **NIST Definition of Traceability:**

“...having an authentic number does not provide complete assurance or evidence that the measurement value provided by another organization is traceable.”<sup>2</sup>

### **National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP) Policy PG-1-1998**

“Citation of a NIST Test Number by the calibration service provider is likewise not acceptable evidence of verification of traceability.”<sup>3</sup>

### **American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA) Policy on NIST Numbers:**

“In summary, to adequately establish an audit trail for traceability, a proper calibration result should include: the assigned value, a stated uncertainty, identification of the standards used in the calibration, and the specification of any environmental conditions of the calibration where correction factors should be applied, if the standard or equipment were to be used under different environmental conditions.”<sup>4</sup>

This position has been adopted by the policy-making organizations of our industry, supported by many major manufacturers and labs and fully complies with most nationally or internationally recognized quality standards.

*Essco will report the calibration report number for each standard and invites any customer to visit and check our methods of maintaining traceability in accordance with ISO/IEC 17025.*

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<sup>1</sup> NCSL Position Statement 96-1, dated 07 May 1996

<sup>2</sup> NIST Traceability Definition

<sup>3</sup> NVLAP Policy Guide, PG-1-1998, March 2, 1998

<sup>4</sup> A2LA Policy