



**A2LA News:** The Newsletter of the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation\_\_ June 2003, Number 81

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Mitzi Miller, A2LA Assessor, and Peter Unger, President, at the 2003 Assessor Conclave

A2LA News June 2003

## A2LA Issues 2000th Certificate of Accreditation

On April 14, 2003, A2LA President Peter Unger presented a Certificate and Scope of Accreditation to [Mr. Tim Melnick, Plant Manager, and his staff](#) at the BOC Gases Royal Oak Laboratory facility, located in Royal Oak, MI. These documents represent the 2000th Certificate issued by A2LA, which is celebrating its 25th anniversary later this year.



Mr. Tim Melnick, Plant Manager, and his staff at the BOC Gases Royal Oak Laboratory facility

"This is another important milestone in the history of A2LA," said Unger. "Given A2LA's commitment to being an internationally recognized leader in laboratory accreditation, it is fitting to have Certificate number 2000 issued to BOC Gases, an international leader in its industry."

"We believe accreditation is the wave of the future," Tim Melnick stated, "and BOC Gases laboratory wanted to be among the first in its industry to get its laboratory accredited."

BOC Gases is one of the world's leading suppliers of calibration standards for vehicle and stationary emissions testing. The laboratory confirms the accuracy of the values of reactive gas standards used to establish testing accuracy critical to the automotive and other industries

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## A2LA at the NCSLI Conference in Tampa

A2LA will once again be participating in the [National Conference of Standards Laboratories](#) (NCSL) International Conference. The theme of the conference to be held August 17-21 in Tampa, FL is "The Spectrum of Metrology: From the State-of-the-Art to the Everyday."

A2LA has booth #227 in the exhibit hall. Adjacent to A2LA's booth will be the exhibit for the [Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation](#) (APLAC). Various staff members will be in the booth throughout the week.

A2LA staff will also be giving several presentations during the conference. Roxanne Robinson, A2LA Vice President, will present her paper, *Anatomy of a Peer Evaluation* describing in detail the process used to evaluate accreditation bodies. Ms. Robinson will also be presenting a workshop entitled *17025- Keeping it Simple*. Peter Unger, A2LA President, will present his paper entitled *Accreditation Standards: Recent Developments*.

We look forward to seeing you at the conference!

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## FALL 2003 TRAINING COURSE SCHEDULE

A2LA is now offering a new course for the Fall of 2003, *Assessment of Laboratory Competence*. This new course was designed and developed to meet the international guidelines for training of ISO/IEC 17025 Assessors. While external third party assessments will be stressed, this course will be equally beneficial to those laboratory personnel who are charged with the tasks of organizing and/or conducting their laboratory's internal audit program. Follow the links below for more details.

Title: [ISO 17025 and Accreditation](#)

September 8-9, 2003 – Williamsburg, VA  
November 17-18, 2003 – Las Vegas, NV

Title: [Introduction to Measurement Uncertainty](#)

September 10-12, 2003 - Williamsburg, VA  
November 19-21, 2003 - Las Vegas, NV

Title: [Assessment of Laboratory Competence](#)

October 20-24, 2003 – Chicago, IL

For additional information, please contact [Ms. Julie Stevens](#), A2LA Training Coordinator, at (301) 644 3235.

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## New Email Notification System for Accredited and Enrolled Laboratories

A2LA has recently completed its construction of an email notification list for all accredited and enrolled laboratories. Notices of policy changes or interpretations, pointers, reminders, and updates within the A2LA accreditation program will be distributed to all laboratories via this email list.

A test run of the system was conducted and one formal notice has already been distributed. In order for this system to work, however, A2LA must maintain on record current email addresses for all official laboratory contacts and corporate representatives. If there is ever a change to your email address, please notify your A2LA Laboratory Services Officer at your earliest opportunity. A2LA also requests updates to this information when each laboratory's annual review and renewal process is initiated.

The intent of this email notification list is to provide timely information to our accredited and enrolled laboratory contacts and to provide a means for keeping them informed of any trends or issues that may affect them and their compliance with the accreditation requirements. We trust that it will be found to be useful and informative, and we certainly welcome any suggested topics for future notices.

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## Recent Staff Changes at A2LA

Please join us in congratulating three members of the A2LA management team. Ramona Saar has accepted the position of Director of Standards and Certification Programs with the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM). [Warren Merkel](#) has been named the new Chief Executive of the National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program (NVLAP), and Thomas Adams has hung out his calibration consultancy shingle.



Warren Merkel

While we are sad to see them leave the association, we take great pride that their background at A2LA has provided them with the knowledge and experience necessary to tackle these new challenges!

### Other Changes:

Teresa Barnett has been promoted to Quality Manager. You previously knew her as Teresa Adams, but that changed with her recent marriage. Teresa was the A2LA Operations Manager and will now handle concerns and complaints, as well as many internal duties including the A2LA News. You can contact Teresa at 301 644 3202 or [tbarnett@a2la.org](mailto:tbarnett@a2la.org).



Steve Medellin

Trace McInturff has been promoted from Program Manager to Operations Manager. He is now responsible for managing Laboratory Services. Over the next several months, most of his laboratories will be reassigned to other staff members.

[Steve Medellin](#) has been promoted to Program Manager of Group II of Laboratory Services. Group II is primarily responsible for mechanical, chemical, electrical, non-destructive, automotive EMC, acoustic and vibration, and thermal testing. Steve has been a Laboratory Services Officer for 5 years.



Robert Miller

[Robert Miller](#) is a new addition to the staff. He is a Laboratory Services Officer in Group II. Robert has a B.S. in computer information systems from Friends University of Wichita, KS. He comes from Cessna Aircraft Corporation where he was a quality assurance representative and manufacturing inspector and is now returning from Kansas to his native Maryland. Prior to that Robert was a crew chief in the United States Air Force.

Dana Leaman has been promoted from Senior Laboratory Services Officer to Program Manager of Group I, calibration. Dana has been working in calibration for 3 years.

Two new Laboratory Services Officers have been hired to deal with the 45% growth in accredited calibration laboratories over the past 2 years. [Lino \(pronounce lee-no\) Severino](#) has an AAS degree in electrical engineering technology from the Community College of the Air Force. His most recent position was with Guilford Pharmaceuticals, Inc as a metrologist responsible for the corporate calibration program. Before that Lino spent 20 years with the United States Air Force repairing and calibrating measurement and test equipment.



Lino Severino

Also joining Group I is [Pamela Wright](#). Pamela is coming from the National Cancer Institute where she was a research assistant participating in the epidemiological research of familial cancers. Prior to that she worked in a clinical lab performing genetic testing of the p53 gene in breast/ovarian cancer patients. She also worked in biological manufacturing for Life Technologies preparing buffers in their clean suites laboratory and later participated in oligonucleotide synthesis and post-synthesis production where she was a colleague of Ada Hensley. Pamela has a B.S. degree from Towson University in Biology.



Pamela Wright

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## A2LA Holds 2003 Conclave

A2LA held its annual Conclave from March 4 through 10, 2003, in Columbia, Maryland. The schedule was slightly modified this year at the request of many attendees to provide minimal disruption of the workweek. While squeezing some breakout sessions into Friday evening, the new schedule allowed many to leave on Sunday evening.

This year there were 13 participants in the assessor orientation course, which started on Tuesday morning and concluded Friday afternoon with the assessor exam. All 13 participants passed the course, and A2LA would like to welcome the new assessors and wish them luck as they enter the next phase of training by performing laboratory assessments.

On Friday, March 7, the [American National Standards Institute](#) (ANSI) hosted its first meeting of accredited product certification representatives, Accreditation Committee members, and assessors/technical experts in conjunction with the Conclave. Lane Hallenbeck of ANSI led the forum. This was the first time ANSI has called together everyone associated with accreditation to ISO/IEC Guide 65 for a discussion of issues affecting the process.

Also on Friday, Oksana Pozda of the [Environmental Protection Agency](#) (EPA) and Ken Stoub held the biannual refresher course for A2LA environmental lead assessors. About a dozen assessors attended the meeting, which covered consistent interpretation of ISO/IEC 17025 and the current [Environmental Lead Program Requirements](#), review of the new [A2LA Environmental Lead Checklist](#), and differences between A2LA's and the [American Industrial Hygiene Association's](#) (AIHA) environmental lead programs.

We tried something new this year with Friday evening breakout sessions held at one of the local restaurants. Sara Weitzel headed a session on various topics for plastic and rubber assessors. Joe Kane led a meeting of non-destructive testing assessors on the [National Aerospace and Defense Contractors Accreditation Program](#) (NADCAP). The Life Sciences Advisory Committee's (LSAC) food assessors met with Roger Brauning to discuss the new [Association of Analytical Communities](#) (AOAC) requirements and A2LA's measurement uncertainty policy requirements for food labs. We expect to continue the Friday evening meetings at future Conclaves although the venue is likely to change.

Saturday was devoted to assessor meetings. Five committees (CMT/geotechnical, life sciences, materials testing, electromechanical, and measurement) met throughout the day to discuss issues particular to the fields. In the evening, the 25th anniversary banquet was held. [Andrew Blackwood](#), [Marlin Bussey](#), [Alex Klein](#), [Doug Lentz](#), and [Neil Zuern](#) received Certificates of Appreciation for service to A2LA. Ken Stoub received the award for Assessor of the Year, and [Doug Berg](#), retiring Chairman of the Board, was awarded the Golden Gavel.



Doug Berg

Andy Blackwood

Marlin Bussey

Alex Klein

Doug Lentz

Meetings on Sunday started early with the Accreditation Council and Criteria Council meetings. These were followed by the Plenary Session. Roxanne Robinson, A2LA Vice-President, gave a presentation on assessor responsibilities during a team assessment. Warren Merkel presented ISO/IEC 17020, *General Criteria for the Operation of Various Types of Bodies Performing Inspection*, and guest speaker, [Dr. George Rodrigues](#) of ARTEL, gave a detailed presentation on measurement uncertainty and traceability of handheld pipettes. The day's meetings concluded with the Assessor Committee meeting hosted by outgoing chair, Nancy Foncannon.



Dr. George Rodrigues,  
Artel

The Conclave concluded on Monday with the Annual Meeting of the Membership. Peter Unger presented the President's report, and the various committee chairs presented reports on the weekend's activities. Peter Unger also discussed the latest news regarding several ISO/IEC documents including proposed revisions to 17025 and 17011, which will supersede Guide 58. The Board of Directors' meeting immediately followed and was the final concluding event of the Conclave.

The 2004 Conclave is scheduled to be held from March 9 – 15 at the Columbia Sheraton. We hope to see you there.

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## Summary of the March 2003 Board of Directors Meeting

The A2LA Board of Directors discussed a number of important issues at its last meeting on March 10, 2003, in Columbia, MD.

A new Chairman of the Board was appointed, Dr. William Kavanagh, in addition to several new officers and members to the Board. The officers for 2003 are:

- John A. Wehrmeyer – First Vice Chairman
- J. Trevor Boyce – Second Vice Chairman
- William M. Harral – Secretary
- Frank Banda - Treasurer

Appointed for new or continued membership for the 2003-2005 term were Daniel Becker, J. Trevor Boyce, William M. Harral, William Kavanagh, Ph.D., Tony Pelegrino, Richard Smittle, and John Wehrmeyer.

A2LA wishes to thank immediate past Chairman Doug Berg of GM Powertrain for his excellent leadership during the

past few years. As immediate past Chairman, Mr. Berg will remain on the BOD Executive Committee.

The Board of Directors appointed a new member to the Accreditation Council (Dennis McCully) and several new members to the Criteria Council (Alex Klein, Pat McCaskey, and Charles Parfitt).

At the March 10 meeting, the Board also discussed the following issues:

- The 2003 A2LA Action Plan and Strategic Plan;
- The possibility of developing a program for the accreditation of medical testing laboratories and any implications that might arise from this;
- The status of implementing the A2LA "Four Year Rule" for proficiency testing participation by accredited laboratories;
- Marketing and communication activities, particularly in light of A2LA's 25th anniversary;
- The status of new and developing programs, including those related to the aerospace, construction materials, [Bluetooth](#) and cellular telecommunications, and Internet industries;
- A2LA's current participation within the [National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation](#) (NACLA);
- Further improvements to A2LA operations and the overall accreditation process.

The next meeting of the A2LA Board will be on June 5-6, 2003, at A2LA headquarters in Frederick, MD.

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## A2LA's "Move" Policy – What is a "Move"?

The [December 2002 A2LA News](#) included an article about the revised A2LA [Conditions for Accreditation](#) requiring laboratories to notify A2LA of changes or pending changes to their location. Since then, we have received a number of inquiries as to what exactly this means and what is our "move" policy.

A laboratory's accreditation is based upon an on-site assessment and satisfactory objective evidence of the laboratory's ability to meet each clause of ISO/IEC 17025, all applicable A2LA requirements, and the requirements of each test method on its Scope of Accreditation. The laboratory's accommodations, environment, and equipment are major contributors to its ability to meet these accreditation requirements. As A2LA accreditation is site specific, the laboratory's Scope is detailed with the address and building/room number (if applicable) that were assessed and deemed to meet the accreditation requirements.

Whenever a laboratory makes a change in its location (a new address or within the same facility), the laboratory is required to notify A2LA headquarters of that change or pending change in location within thirty (30) days of the move or pending move. At that time, Laboratory Services staff will request additional information about the move, i.e., extent of the move, new equipment acquisition, personnel changes, evidence that equipment has been properly recalibrated, readjusted, and verified to give accurate results, and evidence of proper environmental controls within the laboratory to ensure that test method requirements can be met. The laboratory's accreditation is made "inactive" once the move has physically occurred. The laboratory will remain on inactive status until the aforementioned information is received and a determination of ongoing competence is made (either through a document review or through an on-site visit to the new facility by an A2LA technical assessor). Therefore, it is advantageous for the laboratory to notify A2LA of the pending change(s) to its location in order for the period of inactivation to be minimized.

Please do not hesitate to contact your Laboratory Services Officer if you have further questions regarding this issue.

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## Changes in Invoicing for Renewal Assessments

A2LA Financial Services has changed the way it is invoicing laboratories for upcoming renewal assessments. Labs may notice that the amount invoiced is not the same as in the past. Previously, laboratories with a single Scope of

Accreditation were invoiced for an annual fee of \$1,300 and an assessor deposit of \$4,000. An additional \$900 annual fee and \$2,000 assessor deposit were invoiced for each additional scope and/or branch lab. Unless changes were made in the laboratory's structure, the amount of the renewal invoice remained relatively constant from year to year.

A2LA is now basing the assessor deposit on the amount of each lab's previous assessments. For some labs this has resulted in a lower assessor deposit – no complaints there. For others, this has resulted in an increase in the assessor deposit. A2LA's goal is to provide the lab with a more accurate estimate of the final cost of the assessment at the beginning of the process. Under the past system, some labs (those with large scopes requiring proportionately more assessor time or in remote locations or foreign countries requiring higher travel expenses, etc.) would be presented with an invoice after the assessment for thousands of dollars in assessor expenses not covered by the assessor deposit. A2LA is trying to avoid the shock of a large invoice halfway through the assessment process. We have not raised our fees.

We understand that it might appear to labs that we are requesting a large amount of money in advance of the final accreditation date which may be four to six months away. However, the assessors for A2LA are contracted personnel. They pay all assessment expenses out of pocket and are reimbursed after submitting an expense report for the assessment. Often, the reimbursement check is on its way to the assessor before the lab responds with the first corrective action. This being the case, it is our policy not to assign an assessor until the assessor deposit has been received or other arrangements have been made. In many cases the assessors are purchasing non-refundable airline tickets weeks in advance of the assessment and spending hours reviewing documents. We do not want to be in a position where an assessor incurs expenses and A2LA must cover the costs because a lab decides not to pursue accreditation at some point after the assessor has been assigned.

Our goal is to assign an assessor within two weeks of receiving an application. Even though final accreditation is months away, expenses start accruing within a few weeks of the application's arrival, and the majority of expenses are incurred months before final accreditation. Corrective actions must be submitted by the lab and reviewed by staff once the assessment is complete. This may go back and forth several times. Then, the package must be sent to the Accreditation Council for review. This process usually takes about two to three months but may stretch out considerably longer depending on the lab's response time. Usually, the cost of all of these activities is covered by the lab's annual fee. However, at anytime during the process it may be necessary to involve the assessor in a review of technical issues, and the assessor may accrue additional billable time. That is why refunds for deposits in excess of the assessor's expenses are not distributed until the entire accreditation process is complete.

Having said all of this, A2LA will consider alternative payment methods. For example, A2LA will accept a purchase order in lieu of the assessor deposit as long as:

- The lab's previous payment history is satisfactory;
- The PO terms are "net 30;"
- The PO does not include a "not to exceed" clause.

Labs with several branches may wish to pay in installments. Requests for alternative payment arrangements will be considered on a case-by-case basis and should be made promptly upon receipt of the invoice to allow adequate time to complete the payment plan before the assessment is expected to occur. Please contact [Teresa McCarthy](#) at 301 644 3229 to discuss these options. In any case, final invoices that are not paid within 30 days of issue will be considered delinquent regardless of whether or not the accreditation process has been finalized.

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## Meeting the A2LA Proficiency Testing Requirements

The current [A2LA Proficiency Testing Requirements for Accredited Testing and Calibration Laboratories](#) requires accredited laboratories to participate in proficiency testing activities relevant to their Scope of Accreditation at least twice per year and to an extent sufficient to cover their entire Scope over a four year period. If an external, commercial program is available and if the samples offered are relevant to your Scope, then A2LA requires your participation.

Although A2LA has had prior arrangements with several proficiency testing providers whereby results were automatically sent to A2LA after each round, laboratories are asked to submit all relevant data and required corrective action responses as they receive them. Additionally, laboratories are prompted at their annual review and renewal to provide A2LA with their updated plan for meeting the twice-per-year and four-year requirements and to submit any data that A2LA may not yet have received. With the recent changes to the reporting system for [Collaborative Testing Services \(CTS\)](#) – a multi-discipline proficiency testing program – it has become even more critical that laboratories submit their data to A2LA in a timely manner. CTS will no longer be providing A2LA with the data subsequent to each round of testing. As a result, it is now entirely incumbent upon the laboratories to arrange for this documentation to be submitted to A2LA as it becomes available to them.

A2LA has developed a tracking system within our database structure to allow us to monitor proficiency testing performance for each of our accredited laboratories in accordance with their submitted plan. This system will allow us to determine very easily if any laboratory has not met the "twice per year" participation requirement and if any laboratory is in danger of not meeting the "four year rule" overall. Failure to meet either of these requirements may result in revocation of parameters from the Scope or suspension of the overall accreditation.

At this time, the only proficiency testing provider that automatically submits all results directly to A2LA is [ELPAT](#) (the program for Environmental Lead laboratories). Other programs may make arrangements to submit your data to A2LA upon your request, but do not assume that this is automatically being done. Therefore, if you are participating in a program and you wish for the results to be counted toward your twice-per-year and four-year requirements, please be sure to submit the results (as well as any required corrective action responses) directly to A2LA as they are made available to you. At every annual review and renewal, each laboratory's participation for the prior year will be reviewed to ensure that they have met the requirements and to ensure that their proficiency testing participation plan is current.

For a list of [proficiency testing programs](#) of which A2LA is aware, please refer to our website. If you have any questions about the participation requirements, do not hesitate to speak with your Laboratory Services Officer.

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## Recalibration Intervals on Calibration Certificates

During a laboratory's on-site assessment, A2LA assessors look closely at relevant calibration certificates. For testing laboratories, the assessors examine certificates related to the equipment and standards used, looking specifically to see that the calibration certificates received by the testing laboratory are in compliance with the [A2LA Traceability Policy](#) and the laboratory's own purchasing procedure and vendor approval practices. For calibration laboratories, the assessors also examine the certificates they issue to their clients, looking specifically to see that appropriate contract review procedures were adhered to and that appropriate information was presented in the certificates per ISO/IEC 17025 and the [A2LA Calibration Program Requirements](#). If problems are noted with certificates in either of these cases, the assessors bring them to A2LA's attention and cite deficiencies appropriately.

**One of the most common, recurring problems that we see is that of recalibration intervals stated on a certificate of calibration without obtaining prior agreement from the client. The responsibility for ensuring that this problem does not occur is born by both the laboratory that receives the calibration certificates and the calibration laboratory that issues them.**

### Testing and Calibration Laboratories Receiving Calibration Certificates from External Sources

Section 4.6.2 of ISO/IEC 17025 requires laboratories to use services and supplies that comply with specified requirements. In the case of external calibration services, the 'specified requirements' are those outlined in the [A2LA Traceability Policy](#) and ISO/IEC 17025 Section 5.10. As part of their procedure for purchasing services and supplies, laboratories should very clearly communicate with their calibration service provider what is expected of the product received (i.e., the calibration certificate). For example, they should make it very clear if they want: an 'accredited' calibration, a calibration certificate with the accrediting body's logo, a statement of uncertainty, **a statement of any requested recalibration interval**, etc. This final item is only to be included on a calibration certificate with their prior agreement. If they receive a certificate that contains a recalibration interval that they did not request or agree to, then it is their responsibility (per ISO/IEC 17025 Section 4.6.2) to contact the calibration

service provider to resolve the matter (e.g., by requesting an amended certificate). If this is not done, an A2LA assessor will cite a deficiency because you did not ensure that the calibration certificate received was in keeping with what they had requested from their calibration service provider.

#### Calibration Laboratories Issuing Calibration Certificates

Section 4.4.1 of ISO/IEC 17025 requires laboratories to have a procedure for contract review that ensures the requirements of the contract/request for service are adequately defined, documented and understood. Section 5.10.4.4 of ISO/IEC 17025 requires that calibration laboratories **not include on their calibration certificates any recommendation on the calibration interval except where this has been agreed with the client**. If they issue a calibration certificate that contains a recalibration interval, but there is no evidence that this was included only in agreement with the client to whom it was issued (e.g., through implementation of their contract review procedure), the A2LA assessor will cite a deficiency.

This has become a very important issue as we receive more and more examples of the inappropriate use of recalibration intervals on calibration certificates, so it is equally important that all laboratories (whether they are the ones receiving these certificates or the ones issuing them) understand the part they play and the responsibility they bear. A2LA assessors will continue to cite deficiencies if the above problems are noted, but it is our hope that communication between laboratories and their calibration service providers will improve and instances of these problems will be lessened as a result of this reminder.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns regarding this topic, please feel free to contact your specific A2LA Laboratory Services Officer.

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## Why Is There An A2LA Traceability Policy?....And What Is Its Purpose?

The [A2LA Traceability Policy](#) has been in existence for many years, but given the ever-changing scene of laboratory accreditation and the number of new and emerging accreditation bodies in the United States alone, questions continue to arise as to its origins and purpose.

A2LA has signed multi-lateral recognition agreements or arrangements with numerous accreditation bodies throughout the world. The import of these agreements is that the signatories promote the recognition and acceptance of certificates and reports issued by organizations accredited by accreditation bodies that have signed the agreements/arrangements. Through the vehicle of these agreements/arrangements, a uniform level of competence of the accredited bodies involved is assured, and the need for multiple assessments is diminished or eliminated.

A2LA is currently a signatory to the following multi-lateral recognition agreements or arrangements:

- [The Asia-Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation \(APLAC\)](#);
- [The European co-operation for Accreditation \(EA\)](#);
- [The National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation \(NACLA\)](#);
- [The International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation \(ILAC\)](#);
- [The Inter-American Accreditation Cooperation \(IAAC\)](#).

As a signatory to all of these agreements/arrangements, A2LA is committed to promoting the recognition and acceptance of accreditations granted by any of its fellow signatories. Accredited test and calibration results reported by laboratories that are accredited by any of these bodies and reported in a test or calibration report endorsed by the accrediting body's logo (or which otherwise refers to its accredited status) are recognized by A2LA as satisfying the requirements pertaining to measurement traceability as outlined in the [A2LA Traceability Policy](#). As additional accrediting bodies become signatories of the above agreements/arrangements, A2LA will recognize the equivalency of the accreditations they issue, as all recognized accrediting bodies are obligated to do for their fellow signatories.

As of today, the following North American accrediting bodies are signatories to one or more of the agreements/arrangements listed above:

- [A2LA](#);
- [National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program \(NVLAP\)](#);
- [Standards Council of Canada \(SCC\)](#);
- [American Industrial Hygiene Association \(AIHA\)](#);
- [International Accreditation Service, Inc. \(IAS\)](#) (previously known as ICBO Evaluation Service).

As a result, A2LA will accept reports/certificates issued by laboratories accredited by these organizations (or any other signatory organization as mentioned above) as long as the certificate/report is endorsed by the accrediting body's logo or otherwise refers to its accredited status. It is important to note, however, that of the five organizations listed above, only A2LA, NVLAP, and SCC are recognized via the various arrangements/agreements to accredit calibration laboratories. Thus, in North America, these are the only three accreditation bodies that A2LA will accept for the purposes of meeting our traceability policy.

The [A2LA Traceability Policy](#) requires accredited testing laboratories to use accredited calibration laboratories in order to fulfill our obligations under the international mutual recognition agreements of which A2LA is a signatory. Each signatory of these agreements strongly supports the belief that the accuracy of testing results will always be questionable if the instruments employed in performing the tests are not calibrated by an organization that has been subjected to the same level of scrutiny as the accredited testing laboratory. Simply stated, a precisely performed test can yield erroneous results if the instruments used are not calibrated with properly and accurately certified masters. The internationally-accepted means of ensuring that this type of error is not introduced into the tests performed by accredited laboratories is to require that they use only accredited calibration sources.

It is extremely important to realize that in order for an accreditation body's ISO/IEC 17025 accreditation certificates to be internationally recognized (as A2LA's are), they must be active in and ultimately obtain full signatory status within the regional and/or international cooperations listed above. Full signatory status necessarily requires that an accreditation body undergo the same rigorous evaluation and acceptance process that the current signatory and mutually-recognized accreditation bodies have undergone. These regional and international cooperations are not exclusionary. Any party wishing to apply and undergo the evaluation process to determine full compliance with the requirements for mutual recognition is welcome to do so. It is important to note, however, that one specific requirement for mutual recognition is for each accreditation body to have a program/system in place to require all of its accredited testing and calibration laboratories to participate in routine proficiency testing activities. Many organizations issuing ISO/IEC 17025 accreditations who are not signatories of these mutual recognition agreements may not necessarily have implemented this very important practice within their accreditation program requirements.

If you have any questions concerning the history, interpretation or purpose of the A2LA Traceability Policy, do not hesitate to contact [Teresa C. Barnett](#), A2LA Quality Manager (301 644 3202) or any member of A2LA Laboratory Services.