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Guidance Position Statement

Metrication

Statement of Purpose

The American Public Works Association (APWA) seeks to inform the public works community, its professionals and practitioners, policy-makers and decision-makers at all levels of government and the public at-large of its stated position on metrication

Statement of Position

APWA hereby adopts the current edition of IEEE/ASTM SI-10, “Standards for Use of the International System of Units”, as its standard for the metric system.

Background and Rationale

APWA recognizes that conversion to Le Systeme International d’Unites (also referred to as the SI or metric system) in the United States has been a controversial policy issue at all levels of government and the private sector for generations. Several significant efforts initiated at the federal level have been abandoned due to lack of support and commitment from politicians and practitioners. Problems cited include the cost of conversion, lack of awareness and inadequate education of the public and practitioners, and increased confusion and chance for errors in applying the SI units during the transition period.

The American Public Works Association (APWA) believes that all federal, state, and local government agencies responsible for administration, management, operation, maintaining, or provision of services related to public works and infrastructure should ultimately convert to the SI System. However, APWA believes that this cannot happen until the federal and state governments, including all agencies responsible for overseeing infrastructure and public works, make the commitment to change to SI for all infrastructure and public works uses.

APWA believes that the United States’ technological leadership role in the world can temporarily overcome any disadvantages brought by not immediately converting to the SI system. The economic impact of trying to maintain both the English and SI systems may adversely affect federal, state, and local government. However, until there is an unwavering commitment from the state and federal governments to convert, it is not in

the best interest of the APWA organization or its membership to promote or support partial or total conversion to SI by local governments.

Finally, programs that provide resources to assist local government agencies in making the conversion must accompany any state or federal mandates for total conversion to the SI system. These resources must also include significant education programs for citizens, as well as public administrators, engineers, technicians, and other practitioners that will be ultimately be responsible for successful implementation the conversion to metric.

Sponsor

Engineering and Technology Committee