

	DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE National Institute of Standards and Technology National Voluntary Laboratory Accreditation Program	ISSUE DATE: April 3, 2006
	LAB BULLETIN	NUMBER: LB-14-2006 LAP: All
SUBJECT: NVLAP Withdraws from the NACLA MRA		

Effective April 15, 2006, NVLAP will no longer be a signatory to the National Cooperation for Laboratory Accreditation (NACLA) Mutual Recognition Arrangement (MRA). The reasons for NVLAP's decision to withdraw from the MRA are explained in this bulletin.

NVLAP is a fee-supported program and, as such, has been forced to look closely at resources available compared to expenses incurred, both in effort and in dollars. Of primary focus must be the return on the investment made by NVLAP's accredited laboratories. Broad recognition of the test and calibration results generated by the accredited laboratories is currently achieved through NVLAP's signatory status in the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) MRA and in the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC) MRA. NVLAP has also participated in the NACLA MRA in order to comply with the NIST requirement that designated conformity assessment bodies (CABs) supporting trade agreements for telecommunications and information technology products be accredited by a NACLA MRA signatory. Outside of this requirement, there has been little interest expressed by the NVLAP-accredited laboratories that NVLAP maintain signatory status in the NACLA MRA.

In order to support continued manufacturer access to a broad base of designated CABs, NIST has broadened its recognition of qualified accreditation cooperations. In addition to NACLA, NIST recognizes other laboratory accreditation cooperations that are in full conformance with the standards of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) and the International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), including ISO/IEC 17025 and ISO/IEC 17011, and that verify conformance to these standards by evaluation and assessment of peer accreditation bodies. Both ILAC and APLAC meet these requirements for NIST recognition.

NVLAP must look to increase efficiencies and reduce redundancy in its participation in laboratory accreditation cooperations in order to minimize the burden on its accredited laboratories and on NVLAP staff. Under current conditions, NVLAP can no longer justify the costs of continued NACLA MRA participation.

Annex B of NIST Handbook 150, *NVLAP Procedures and General Requirements*, states that all NVLAP-accredited laboratories must demonstrate traceability of measurement results directly through a national metrology institute (NMI) or through an accredited calibration laboratory. An accredited calibration laboratory is defined as one that has been accredited by NVLAP or an accreditation body (AB) with which NVLAP has a mutual recognition arrangement.

Beginning April 15, 2006, results from laboratories accredited only by those ABs that have signed the International Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (ILAC) MRA will be acceptable for the purpose of traceability of measurement results. Please note that ABs that are signatories to the Asia Pacific Laboratory Accreditation Cooperation (APLAC), the European Laboratory

Accreditation Cooperation (EA), or another recognized regional organization MRA have also signed the ILAC MRA. To date, NACLA is not a recognized regional organization and its signatory members have not been invited to sign the ILAC arrangement.

Given the deadline noted in the previous paragraph, results previously accepted from a calibration laboratory accredited by a non-ILAC signatory AB will remain acceptable until the current calibration cycle expires. This means, for example, that it is not necessary to have instruments recalibrated by a laboratory accredited by an ILAC MRA signatory AB until that instrument is due. At that time calibration services must be procured from an NMI or from a calibration laboratory that has been accredited by an ILAC signatory AB. Where accredited calibration services are not available, paragraph B.3.4 of Annex B of NIST Handbook 150:2006 (paragraph B.2.4 of the 2001 edition) applies with no change. Assessors will review this requirement during the next on-site assessment of your laboratory. Please contact your NVLAP Program Manager should you have any questions.