

## Standards Modification Process

How do standards get changed? In some organizations, there are very elaborate and complicated processes that involve committees, peer review and a great deal of time. And then there is the situation where a change is handed down from on high and no one is really sure how the decision was made or who was involved. NTRAK was at one end of the spectrum while Mil-Spec standards are at the other end. Sometimes standards do not get changed because there is no way to change them or there is too much resistance to change.

Recently, NTRAK did make some changes to its standards. Most of those were simply adjusting the standard to conform to what was being practiced. Interestingly the standards went out for review several months before the vote was taken, but most of the comments and reaction came as soon as the voting was announced.

One of the questions that was raised was how are NTRAK standards changed? This was coupled to a suggestion for a change, relating to track. Since we do not have a documented procedure, now seems like a good time to put together the guidelines for future reference.

First, any member may suggest a change to the standard.

The suggestion should be accompanied by:

- Detail on the change, which may include dimension, or usage or procedures related to the change.
- Why is this change being suggested? How would it benefit the NTRAK community?
- What are the consequences of the change? This should include any negative aspects as well as those that are positive.
- What is the timing for the change? Should it become effective immediately, or should it be something that can be phased in over a period of time such as the updated wiring standard?
- What is the effect on compatibility. How can we maintain the ability to mix existing modules in with those that implement this recommended change?

The proposal should be submitted to the board in writing or through a letter to the Newsletter editor. The board will present these requests to the membership for discussion on a yearly basis and allow for at least a period of three months, encompassing time for publication of the proposal and one issue of the newsletter and comments in the following issue. The board may or may not make a recommendation to the membership and that recommendation can be either positive or negative. Finally, the proposal will be presented to the membership for a vote.