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# U.A.E. Standards & Technical Regulations

A Primer



February 2017

## Foreword

Standards and technical regulations are vital for both individuals and societies. They help give individuals confidence that products will function as advertised, interoperate with other products, and do them no harm. They also help governments protect public health and the environment.



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At the same time, standards and technical regulations are crucial for businesses. While businesses may occasionally chafe at excessive regulations, they generally help ensure that businesses have reliable inputs for their production processes. Moreover, they help create a national market for goods and facilitate international trade.

This primer will provide an overview of standards and technical regulations in the U.A.E. First, it will introduce the U.A.E.'s standardization body, the Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA), and the processes through which the authority develops both standards and technical regulations. Then, it will discuss how businesses can stay abreast of U.A.E. standards and regulations as well as demonstrate their conformity with these measures. This paper will subsequently review some recent ESMA initiatives in 2016 as well as some of the authority's plans for 2017. Finally, it will conclude by offering a list of ways that U.S. businesses can engage with ESMA and provide contact information along these lines.



مؤسسة الإمارات للمواصفات والمقاييس  
Emirates Authority For Standardization & Metrology

In so doing, this report seeks to achieve several objectives:

- Facilitate the sale of products in the U.A.E. market by providing a clear and comprehensive overview of standards and technical regulations in that country;
- Help those businesses already active in the U.A.E. market adapt to, and prepare for, recent and future ESMA initiatives; and
- Encourage businesses to be proactive about engaging with ESMA about standards through appropriate channels.

The U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council would like to thank its partners at ESMA for their assistance in the publication of this report. The Business Council looks forward to continuing to work with ESMA in helping U.S. and U.A.E. businesses navigate the commercial and regulatory landscape in the U.A.E.

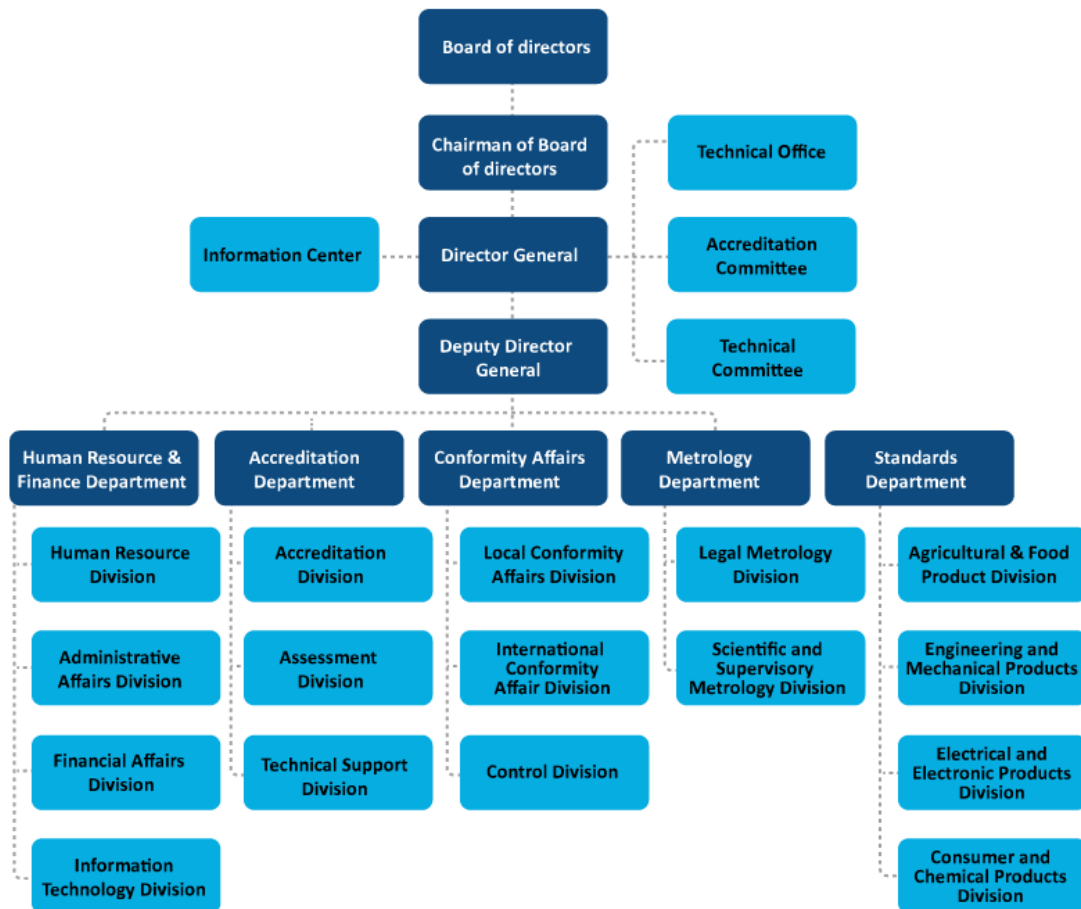
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## Introduction to ESMA

The Emirates Authority for Standardization and Metrology (ESMA) was officially established as the national standardization body of the U.A.E. under Federal Law No. 28 of 2001. It began as a standardization department under the Ministry of Finance that was first created in 1977.

ESMA is mandated to formulate and issue national standards as well as adopt international standards and mandatory standards issued via binding resolutions of the U.A.E.'s Council of Ministers. In addition to this, ESMA grants the Emirates Quality Mark (EQM) and Certificates of Conformity (CoCs); accredits Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs); and publishes information regarding standards and technical regulations. It also oversees the U.A.E.'s National System for Measurement and Calibration.



ESMA reports directly to the U.A.E. Cabinet. A Board of Directors (BoD), chaired by Minister of State H.E. Dr. Rashid Ahmed Bin Fahad, oversees the authority's operations. ESMA's Director General, Abdulla Abdelqader Al Maeeni, manages the organization, as well as its Information Center, Technical Office, and Accreditation and Technical Committees.

In addition to the above sections, ESMA includes five other departments: the Human Resource & Finance Department, Accreditation Department, Conformity Affairs Department, Metrology Department, and Standards Department. Its headquarters is located in Abu Dhabi and it maintains a branch office in Dubai where its Director General is situated.

## **How Standards are Developed**

ESMA is the U.A.E.'s sole body charged with developing standards, which can best be defined as “requirements, specifications, guidelines, or characteristics that can be used consistently to ensure that materials, products, processes, and services are fit for their purpose.”<sup>1</sup>

The main body at ESMA charged with developing standards is its Standards Department. This Department consists of four divisions: the Agricultural & Food Product Division, the Engineering and Mechanical Products Division, the Electrical and Electronic Products Division, and the Consumer and Chemical Products Division. As such, this department can bring specialized knowledge to bear on particular issues.

Once ESMA prepares standard specifications, they are reviewed by specialized technical committees. ESMA has such committees in the fields of food products, construction and building materials, electrical and electronic products, chemical and plastic products, mechanical products, petroleum products and lubricants, metrology, and information technology.<sup>2</sup> These committees provide additional technical expertise and they also, in the words of the U.S. Department of Commerce, “promote transparency and industry and stakeholder input.”<sup>3</sup>

In addition to engaging local stakeholders, ESMA also regularly engages with regional and international standards organizations. Along these lines, ESMA is a member of the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO).<sup>4</sup> It is also a member of the International Standards Organization (ISO), International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC), and other major international standards bodies.<sup>5</sup>



Through this engagement, ESMA seeks to achieve alignment with international standards. This alignment enables the U.A.E. to both benefit from international best practices and better integrate its domestic market with the global economy.

Ultimately, ESMA generally develops standards according to existing international and regional standards.<sup>6</sup>

### **How Technical Regulations are Developed**

In addition to developing standards, ESMA also produces technical regulations. Technical regulations are documents that include specifications and requirements for regulated products and/or processes including applicable administrative provisions with which compliance is mandatory, unlike standards.

The process of issuing a technical regulation can be initiated in several different ways. It can be triggered by a request from one of ESMA's partners, including government entities, manufacturers, and traders. Alternately, it can be based on ESMA's assessment of market needs or the impact of a product on consumers.

ESMA ultimately leads the process of proposing a technical regulation. This involves studying the impact of implementing such a regulation, identifying an appropriate benchmark, involving relevant stakeholders, forming a national committee, drafting a regulation, and then circulating the draft regulation to concerned government entities, the WTO, and related manufacturers and traders.

After this process is completed, the U.A.E. Cabinet issues the final technical regulation and the regulation is implemented by ESMA or approved bodies as well as U.A.E. government entities. The roles and responsibilities of these entities are identified in the regulation itself.

### **How Businesses Keep Abreast of Standards and Regulations**

Businesses can keep informed about U.A.E. standards and regulations thanks to the activities of ESMA's information center, which is designed to serve users both nationally and internationally.<sup>7</sup>

ESMA's website is perhaps the best source of information on U.A.E. standards and technical regulations. This website provides a list of both regulated products and issued regulations (under "Laws and Legislations").<sup>8</sup> It also offers a means to purchase standards.<sup>9</sup>

ESMA's website is not the only source for information on standards, however. Standards are available for sale at ESMA's head office in Abu Dhabi and branch office in Dubai.<sup>10</sup> They are also numbered and published in the Official Gazette.<sup>11</sup>

## The “Notify U.S.” Service

The WTO’s Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Agreement seeks to ensure that “technical regulations, standards, and conformity assessment procedures are non-discriminatory and do not create unnecessary obstacles to trade.”<sup>12</sup> As a member country of the WTO, the U.A.E. is required under the TBT Agreement to report to the WTO all proposed technical regulations that could affect trade with other member countries.<sup>13</sup> The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), which is part of the U.S. Department of Commerce, offers a free, web-based e-mail registration service called “Notify U.S.” that “offers U.S. entities an opportunity to “review and comment” on such proposed technical regulations prior to their implementation.”<sup>14</sup>

## How Businesses Demonstrate Conformity with Standards and Regulations

Businesses can demonstrate the conformity of their products with relevant ESMA standards and technical regulations through engagement with ESMA’s Conformity Affairs Department. This Department is charged with implementing the U.A.E.’s technical regulations and schemes for assessing whether products comply with regulations.

Businesses can acquire certificates of conformity for products through the Emirates Conformity Assessment Scheme (ECAS). This scheme, which is administered by the Conformity Affairs Department, certifies that a product will continuously comply with applicable U.A.E. standards and technical requirements of ESMA. It does so by, among other things, allowing ESMA-authorized personnel to conduct on-site assessments and giving such personnel full authority to verify the compliance of the product.<sup>15</sup>



In addition, through the Conformity Affairs Department, businesses can obtain an Emirates Quality Mark (EQM). The EQM is a mark of conformity that is given after a comprehensive evaluation of the product and the quality system used by the manufacturer.<sup>16</sup> The EQM is a purely voluntary mark for products, with the exception of drinking water.<sup>17</sup>



Businesses can also acquire a variety of other mandatory or voluntary labels from the Conformity Affairs Department. The U.A.E. has, for instance, introduced a Halal National Mark that enables consumers to confirm products, services, and production systems are halal, or permitted by Islamic law.<sup>18</sup> The U.A.E. also has marks and labeling systems for organic food, biodegradable products (such as plastic bags), energy-efficient appliances (such as air conditioners and washing machines), car tires, and more.<sup>19</sup>



### **The G Mark**

The Gulf Mark (G Mark) is a conformity marking developed by the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO). It is currently only applicable for Low Voltage Electrical Equipment and Appliances (GSO BD1420004-01) and Children's Toys (GSO BD131704-01). The Regulations for the G Mark and the scope of G Mark can be downloaded from the GSO's website.



### **How Conformity is Assessed and Monitored**

In order to assess the conformity of products to relevant standards, the U.A.E. relies on a large number of Conformity Assessment Bodies (CABs), or independent bodies that are accredited to perform conformity assessments by ESMA's Accreditation Department.

ESMA's Accreditation Department accredits CABs through the Emirates National Accreditation Scheme (ENAS). Once ESMA determines that CABs are technically competent to perform specific tasks described in an accreditation scope document, they are granted accreditation certifications to execute those tasks.<sup>20</sup> In this way, ESMA accredits testing and calibration labs, inspection bodies, product certification bodies, and more.<sup>21</sup>



In addition to accrediting CABs, ESMA also monitors conformity of products to standards and regulations through regular market surveillance and inspection. In this, it is assisted by relevant U.A.E. government entities.

## Recent ESMA Initiatives

In 2016, ESMA garnered significant publicity for a wide variety of initiatives, particularly in the motor vehicles sector. In March 2016, the authority announced that it was in the final stage of developing regulations related to the importation of used motor vehicles. Then, in September 2016, it announced the completion of a new set of standards regulating motor vehicle spare parts for U.A.E. Cabinet approval.

In the area of fuel efficiency, ESMA also launched several notable initiatives in 2016. In February 2016, the authority established regulations mandating fuel efficiency ratings for motor vehicles beginning with 2017 models. This initiative was followed by the implementation of fuel efficiency and wet grip ratings for tires manufactured and/or sold in the country, also starting in the beginning of 2017. In addition to this, the authority laid down a new draft standard for a vehicle's fuel economy.

At the same time, ESMA made headlines in 2016 for numerous initiatives related to new means of transportation. In July 2016, the authority's minimum specifications for electric vehicles came into effect, defining requirements particularly in relation to the adaptability of these vehicles to local weather conditions. The authority also partnered with a leading car manufacturer, Mercedes-Benz, and the U.A.E.'s Road Transportation Authority (RTA) in November 2016 to oversee the first-ever automated drive from Dubai to Abu Dhabi. The following month, the authority successfully hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> Future Mobility Conference, which was held in Dubai, U.A.E.

Outside of transportation, ESMA also launched an important initiative related to LED lights. In May 2016, ESMA inaugurated the "I LED the way" campaign to promote the use of LED lights and energy efficiency. This has long been a focus area for ESMA, which banned the sales of incandescent light bulbs years ago.<sup>22</sup>

ESMA also made waves both at home and abroad through its work in the area of halal standards. Notably, in November 2016, the International Halal Accreditation Forum (IHAF) convened its first General Assembly meeting in Dubai.<sup>23</sup> Jointly spearheaded by the Dubai Islamic Economy Development Centre and ESMA, IHAF seeks to establish a "solid ground for the global industry of Halal food and non-food products" (such as halal makeup) through its work "to protect the growing number of Halal consumers and to facilitate international trade."<sup>24</sup>



Finally, ESMA created new standards and technical regulations with regards to water fixtures. This is crucially important for a country so highly dependent on desalination for its water needs. In September 2016, Gulf News reported that the U.A.E. currently spends nearly 12 billion AED [\$3.27 billion] per year on water desalination.<sup>25</sup>

### **Upcoming ESMA Initiatives**

In keeping with U.A.E. efforts to make the country the epicenter of the world's Islamic economy, ESMA will continue its focus on halal standards in 2017. More specifically, ESMA will center its efforts on halal service standards, particularly as they pertain to restaurants, hotels, spas, and logistics.

At the same time, the authority will continue its efforts in the regulation of motor vehicle workshops. It aims to categorize and rate these workshops according to their service quality and expertise. It will then make this information available to motorists to assist them when choosing which workshops to use for their vehicles.

The fast-developing sector of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) or “drones” will also be a focus area for ESMA in 2017. Realizing its importance and the level of risk for public safety, the authority has begun providing a framework for initiatives in this area, starting with the requirement to register drones made available in the U.A.E. (including their technical specifications). This requirement will provide substantial information for future regulation.

Meanwhile, in the area of amusement parks and rides, ESMA will continue the development of several technical regulations ensuring that these facilities are at par with global standards in relation to safety. The U.A.E. has become a regional center for entertainment parks, and previous years have seen a significant increase in this sector. Some final areas of focus for ESMA in 2017 will be new textile technical regulations, a meat classification scheme, a telecommunications scheme, and an “Emirates Environmental Label.”

### **How Businesses Can Engage with ESMA**

Businesses can engage with ESMA in a variety of ways, including through direct channels. Relevant contact information for ESMA and its various departments can be found below:

ESMA Abu Dhabi Headquarters  
P.O. Box 2166, Abu Dhabi, U.A.E.

Phone: +971 2 671 1110 | +971 2 676 3743  
Fax: +971 2 671 5999  
Email: [esma@esma.ae](mailto:esma@esma.ae)

ESMA Dubai Office  
P.O. Box 48666, Dubai, U.A.E.  
Phone: +971 4 294 9909  
Fax: +971 4 294 4112  
Email: [esma@esma.ae](mailto:esma@esma.ae)

Accreditation Department  
P.O. Box 48666, Dubai, U.A.E.  
Phone: +971 4 294 4434  
Fax: +971 4 294 4428  
Email: [accreditation@esma.ae](mailto:accreditation@esma.ae)

Conformity Affairs Department (CAD)  
P.O. Box 48666, Dubai, U.A.E.  
Phone: +971 4 295 1626  
Fax: +971 4 294 1898  
Email: [conformity@esma.ae](mailto:conformity@esma.ae)

Metrology Department  
P.O. Box 48666, Dubai, U.A.E.  
Phone: +971 4 294 4434  
Fax: +971 4 294 4428  
Email: [metrology@esma.ae](mailto:metrology@esma.ae)<sup>26</sup>

ESMA stands ready to help inform businesses about relevant standards and ensure their conformity. ESMA will also accept feedback during the process of developing standards. According to the Department of Commerce, companies and organizations have the opportunity to engage with ESMA on draft standards, and comments on draft standards are generally accepted for 60 days.<sup>27</sup>

In addition, businesses can engage ESMA through the U.S.-U.A.E. Business Council. The Business Council is fortunate to enjoy a warm relationship with ESMA's leadership and a cooperative working relationship with the organization writ large. As such, the Business Council is well-positioned to both serve as a source of information about ESMA initiatives and a collective voice of the U.S. businesses community regarding industry concerns.

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  - <sup>3</sup> <https://www.export.gov/article?id=United-Arab-Emirates-trade-standards>
  - <sup>4</sup> <https://www.gso.org.sa/gso-website/gso-website/about-gso/about/member-countries>
  - <sup>5</sup> <http://www.iec.ch/dyn/www/f?p=103:5:0>; <http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about.htm>; <http://www.iec.ch/about/>
  - <sup>6</sup> <https://www.export.gov/article?id=United-Arab-Emirates-trade-standards>
  - <sup>7</sup> [http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/iso\\_members/iso\\_member\\_body.htm?member\\_id=1704](http://www.iso.org/iso/home/about/iso_members/iso_member_body.htm?member_id=1704)
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