Objectives and uses of AAMI standards and recommended practices

It is most important that the objectives and potential uses of an AAMI product standard or recommended practice are clearly understood. The objectives of AAMI’s technical development program derive from AAMI’s overall mission: the advancement of medical instrumentation. Essential to such advancement are (1) a continued increase in the safe and effective application of current technologies to patient care, and (2) the encouragement of new technologies. It is AAMI’s view that standards and recommended practices can contribute significantly to the advancement of medical instrumentation, provided that they are drafted with attention to these objectives and provided that arbitrary and restrictive uses are avoided.

A voluntary standard for a medical device recommends to the manufacturer the information that should be provided with or on the product, basic safety and performance criteria that should be considered in qualifying the device for clinical use, and the measurement techniques that can be used to determine whether the device conforms with the safety and performance criteria and or to compare the performance characteristics of different products. Some standards emphasize the information that should be provided with the device, including performance characteristics, instructions for use, warnings and precautions, and other data considered important in ensuring the safe and effective use of the device in the clinical environment. Recommending the disclosure of performance characteristics often necessitates the development of specialized test methods to facilitate uniformity in reporting; reaching consensus on these tests can represent a considerable part of committee work. When a drafting committee determines that clinical concerns warrant the establishment of minimum safety and performance criteria, referee tests must be provided and the reasons for establishing the criteria must be documented in the rationale.

A recommended practice provides guidelines for the use, care, and/or processing of a medical device or system. A recommended practice does not address device performance per se, but rather procedures and practices that will help ensure that a device is used safely and effectively and that its performance will be maintained.

Although a device standard is primarily directed to the manufacturer, it may also be of value to the potential purchaser or user of the device as a frame of reference for device evaluation. Similarly, even though a recommended practice is usually oriented towards healthcare professionals, it may be useful to the manufacturer in better understanding the environment in which a medical device will be used. Also, some recommended practices, while not addressing device performance criteria, provide guidelines to industrial personnel on such subjects as sterilization processing, methods of collecting data to establish safety and efficacy, human engineering, and other processing or evaluation techniques; such guidelines may be useful to health care professionals in understanding industrial practices.

In determining whether an AAMI standard or recommended practice is relevant to the specific needs of a potential user of the document, several important concepts must be recognized:

All AAMI standards and recommended practices are voluntary (unless, of course, they are adopted by government regulatory or procurement authorities). The application of a standard or recommended practice is solely within the discretion and professional judgment of the user of the document.

Each AAMI standard or recommended practice reflects the collective expertise of a committee of health care professionals and industrial representatives, whose work has been reviewed nationally (and sometimes internationally). As such, the consensus recommendations embodied in a standard or recommended practice are intended to respond to clinical needs and, ultimately, to help ensure patient safety. A standard or recommended practice is limited, however, in the sense that it responds generally to perceived risks and conditions that may not always be relevant to specific situations. A standard or recommended practice is an important reference in responsible decision-making, but it should never replace responsible decision-making.

Despite periodic review and revision (at least once every five years), a standard or recommended practice is necessarily a static document applied to a dynamic technology. Therefore, a standards user must carefully review the reasons why the document was initially developed and the specific rationale for each of its provisions. This review will reveal whether the document remains relevant to the specific needs of the user.

Particular care should be taken in applying a product standard to existing devices and equipment, and in applying a recommended practice to current procedures and practices. While observed or potential risks with existing equipment typically form the basis for the safety and performance criteria defined in a standard, professional judgment must be used in applying these criteria to existing equipment. No single source of information will serve to identify a particular product as unsafe. A voluntary standard can be used as one resource, but the ultimate decision as to product safety and efficacy must take into account the specifics of its utilization and, of course, cost-benefit considerations. Similarly, a recommended practice should be analyzed in the context of the specific needs and resources of the individual institution or firm. Again, the rationale accompanying each AAMI standard and recommended practice is an excellent guide to the reasoning and data underlying its provision.

In summary, a standard or recommended practice is truly useful only when it is used in conjunction with other sources of information and policy guidance and in the context of professional experience and judgment.

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American National Standard

ANSI/AAMI ST8:2013
(Revision of ANSI/AAMI ST8:2008)

Hospital steam sterilizers

This is a preview edition of an AAMI guidance document and is intended to allow potential purchasers to evaluate the content of the document before making a purchasing decision.

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Developed by
Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation

Approved 25 April 2013 by
American National Standards Institute Inc.

Abstract: This standard covers minimum construction and performance requirements for hospital sterilizers that use saturated steam as the sterilizing agent and have a volume greater than 56.63 liters (2 cubic feet).

Keywords: moist heat sterilization, saturated steam, steam quality, steam sterilization
AAMI Standard

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www.aami.org/standards/glossary.pdf

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Association for the Advancement of Medical Instrumentation

Hospital Steam Sterilizer Working Group

This standard was developed by the AAMI Hospital Steam Sterilizer Working Group under the auspices of the AAMI Sterilization Standards Committee. Approval of the standard does not necessarily mean that all working group members voted for its approval.

At this time this document was published, the AAMI Hospital Steam Sterilizer Working Group had the following members:

Cochairs:  Rose E. Seavey, RN MBA CNO R.CRCST
Mark N. Smith

Members:
Nola Bayes, MBA, Sanford Health
Gary Wayne Benning, Midmark Corporation
Mark Chiffon, STERIS Corporation
Nancy Chobin, RN CSPDM, St Barnabas Healthcare System
John T. Collins, MSEE, American Society for Healthcare Engineering
Ramona Conner, RN MSN CNOR, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Betty D. Edge, Northshore University Hospital
Rosie Fardo, RN BSN CIC CHSP, Department of Veterans Affairs, VA Medical Center of Cincinnati
Marcia Ann Frieze, Case Medical Inc.
Steve N. Goldstine, PhD, Steve Goldstine Consultants
Charles Oren Hancock, RAC, H&W Technology LLC, Charles O Hancock Associates
Michael Shane Huey, BA CRCST, St Marys Medical Center
Nyla Skee Japp, PhD RN CSPDM, Integrated Medical Systems
Steve Kirckof, 3M Healthcare
Susan G. Klacik, CCSMC FCS ACE, International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Managemen
Colleen Patricia Landers, RN, Landers Consulting, Canadian Standards Association
Shannon E. Mills, American Dental Association
Emily Mitzel, MS, Nelson Laboratories Inc.
Thomas K. Moore, Independent Expert
Gregg A. Mosley, Biotest Laboratories Inc.
Leslie A. Phillips, Bausch & Lomb Inc.
Anthony Powell, Getinge USA
Shaundrea L. Rechsteiner, NAMSA
Elizabeth A. Riegel, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Devices and Radiological Health
Rose E. Seavey, RN MBA CNOR CRCST, Seavey Healthcare Consulting Inc.
Frank Sizemore, Wake Forest University, Baptist Medical Center
Linda Slone, RN BSPA CNOR, Independent Expert
Gary J. Socola, SPS Medical Supply Corp
Andrea Sun, SciCan Ltd
Karen Swanson, Connecticut Childrens Medical Center
Michael D. Tambasco, Proper Manufacturing Co Inc.
Nora E. Wikander, RN CSPDM, St Josephs Wayne Hospital
Martha Young, Association for Professionals in Infection Control and Epidemiology

Alternates:  Dorin Cioraca, SciCan Ltd
Lori Colvin, STERIS Corporation
Julie M. Conyer, Bausch & Lomb Inc.
Joel R. Gorski, PhD, NAMSA
Thomas Grobaski, Belimed Inc.
Steve Gruninger, American Dental Association
Danny Hutson, CareFusion
Natalie Lind, International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management
Tania Lupu, Case Medical Inc
Sheila A. Murphey, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Devices and Radiological Health
Jason Pope, Nelson Laboratories Inc.
Mark N. Smith, Getinge USA
Donald Tumminelli, SPS Medical Supply Corp
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At this time this document was published, the **AAMI Sterilization Standards Committee** had the following members:

**Chairs:**
Victoria M. Hitchins, PhD
Michael H. Scholla, PhD

**Members:**
Christopher Anderson, Boston Scientific Corporation
Trabue D. Bryans, WuXi AppTec Inc.
Peter A. Burke, PhD, STERIS Corporation
Nancy Chobin, RN CSPDM, St Barnabas Healthcare System
Charles Cogdill, Covidien
Ramona Conner, RN MSN CNOR, Association of periOperative Registered Nurses
Jacqueline Daley, Sinai Hospital of Baltimore
Kimbrell Darnell, CR Bard
Dave Dion, Cardinal Health
Lisa Foster, Sterigenics
Joel R. Gorski, PhD, NAMSA
Deborah A. Havlik, Hospira Worldwide Inc.
Victoria M. Hitchins, PhD, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, Center for Devices and Radiological Health
Susan G. Klacik, CCSMC FCS ACE, International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management
Byron J. Lambert, PhD, Abbott Laboratories
Colleen Patricia Landers, RN, Landers Consulting, Canadian Standards Association
Lisa N. Macdonald, Becton Dickinson & Company
Jeff Martin, Alcon Laboratories Inc.
Patrick J. McCormick, PhD, Bausch & Lomb Inc.
Rainer Newman, Johnson & Johnson
Janet M. Prust, 3M Healthcare
Nancy Rakiewicz, Moog Medical Devices
Michael H. Scholla, Dupont Protection Technologies
Mark Seybold, Baxter Healthcare Corporation
Andrew Sharavara, PhD, Propper Manufacturing Co Inc.
Mark N. Smith, Getinge USA
Martell Kress Winters, BS SM, Nelson Laboratories Inc.
William E. Young

**Alternates:**
Lloyd Brown, Covidien
Glenn W. Calvert, Becton Dickinson & Company
Steven J. Elliott, WuXi AppTec Inc.
Thomas J. Frazier, Johnson & Johnson
Kathy Hoffman, Sterigenics International
Jim Kaiser, Bausch & Lomb Inc
Natalie Lind, International Association of Healthcare Central Service Materiel Management
Reynaldo Lopez, Cardinal Health
Ralph Makinen, Boston Scientific Corporation
Mary S. Mayo, CR Bard
David Ford McGoldrick, BS, Abbott Laboratories
James B. Neher, MS RAC, NAMSA
Jerry R. Nelson, PhD, Nelson Laboratories Inc.
Karen Polkinghome, Dupont Protection Technologies
Wallace E. Puckett, PhD, STERIS Corporation
Mike Sadowski, Baxter Healthcare Corporation
Jason Voisinet, Moog Medical Devices
Craig A. Wallace, 3M Healthcare
Valerie Welter, Hospira Worldwide Inc.

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Foreword

This standard was developed by the AAMI Hospital Steam Sterilizer Working Group under the auspices of the AAMI Sterilization Standards Committee. The objective of this standard is to provide minimum labeling, safety, performance, and testing requirements to help ensure a reasonable level of safety and efficacy in steam sterilizers that are intended for use in health care facilities and that have a volume greater than 56.63 liters (2 cubic feet).

This standard is the sixth edition of Hospital steam sterilizers, which was first published as an American National Standard in February 1983 as “ANSI/AAMI ST8—1982.” AAMI procedures require that standards be reviewed and, if necessary, revised at least once every five years. Accordingly, Hospital steam sterilizers was updated and published in revised editions in 1988, 1994, 2001, and 2008. The present (sixth) edition (a) requires moisture retention tests to be conducted separately from the biological performance tests and to utilize full sterilization cycles rather than half-cycles, (b) excludes drying time from being used during the biological performance testing, (c) incorporates the term “immediate-use steam sterilization” (IUSS) in place of the term “flash sterilization,” (d) allows for electronic recording devices to be provided instead of a printer with a printout, and (e) adds a requirement that the instructions for use (IFU) specify a process for cleaning the chamber and loading equipment.

Compliance with this standard does not guarantee that sterilization will be achieved, but it does help ensure that the steam sterilizer will be capable of providing the conditions necessary to achieve product sterility when operated according to appropriate procedures.

This voluntary standard is intended primarily for use by equipment manufacturers in the performance and design qualification of steam sterilizers intended for use in health care facilities. The criteria defined in this standard might be useful to health care personnel and purchasing authorities in the acquisition process. However, the standard is not intended to provide guidelines for hospital receiving inspection testing or for steam sterilization procedures in health care facilities. In addition, any problems with existing equipment should not be judged solely in terms of its conformance to this standard.

As used within the context of this document, “shall” indicates requirements strictly to be followed in order to conform to the standard; “should” indicates that among several possibilities one is recommended as particularly suitable, without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required, or that (in the negative form) a certain possibility or course of action should be avoided but is not prohibited; “may” is used to indicate that a course of action is permissible within the limits of the standard; and “can” is used as a statement of possibility and capability. “Must” is used only to describe “unavoidable” situations, including those mandated by government regulation.

This standard should be considered flexible and dynamic. As technology advances and as new data are brought forward, the standard will be reviewed and, if necessary, revised.

Suggestions for improving this recommended practice are invited. Comments and suggested revisions should be sent to: Standards Department, AAMI, 4301 N. Fairfax Dr., Suite 301, Arlington, VA 22203-1633.

NOTE—This foreword does not contain provisions of ANSI/AAMI ST8:2013, Hospital steam sterilizers, but it does provide important information about the development and intended use of the document.
Hospital steam sterilizers

1 Scope

1.1 General

This standard applies to steam sterilizers that are intended for use in hospitals and other health care facilities and that have a volume greater than 56.63 liters (L) (2 cubic feet [ft³]).

NOTE—For purposes of this standard, health care facilities means hospitals, nursing homes, extended-care facilities, freestanding surgical centers, clinics, and medical and dental offices. For convenience, the term hospital is sometimes used in this standard; in all instances, this term should be taken to encompass all other health care facilities.

1.2 Inclusions

This standard covers minimum labeling, safety, performance, and testing requirements for steam sterilizers that have a volume greater than 56.63 L (2 ft³), have automatic controls, generally use an external steam source (but might also have an integral electric boiler), and provide a means for automatically recording time and temperature. Definitions of terms and normative references are also included, as well as an annex explaining the rationale for the provisions of the standard and other informative annexes.

NOTE—This standard is intended primarily for use by manufacturers in the performance and design qualification of steam sterilizers intended for use in health care facilities. The criteria defined in this standard might be useful to health care personnel and purchasing authorities in the acquisition process. However, the standard is not intended to provide guidelines for hospital receiving inspection testing or for steam sterilization procedures in health care facilities.

1.3 Exclusions

Sterilizers that generate steam inside the sterilizing chamber, washer-sterilizers, and all other sterilizers not covered in 1.2 are excluded from this standard. Likewise, this standard does not cover installation acceptance testing, sterilization procedures, machine-operator requirements, or sterility assurance testing in health care facilities.

NOTE—Minimum labeling and performance requirements for small steam sterilizers (those that are 56.63 L [2 ft³] or less in volume) are covered in ANSI/AAMI ST55; guidelines for the use of such sterilizers are provided in ANSI/AAMI ST79. ANSI/AAMI ST79 also covers inhospital steam sterilization procedures and quality control, as well as the selection and use of containment devices intended for use in steam sterilization.

2 Normative references

The following documents contain provisions that, through reference in this text, constitute provisions of this standard. For dated references, subsequent amendments to, or revisions of, any of these publications do not apply. However, parties to agreements based on this standard are encouraged to investigate the possibility of applying the most recent editions of the normative documents indicated below. For undated references, the latest edition of the normative reference referred to applies. AAMI maintains registers of currently valid AAMI technical documents.

2.1 American Society of Mechanical Engineers. Boiler and pressure vessel code (with current amendments). New York: ASME.


NOTE—For product conformity assessments, the Part 2 standard for steam sterilizers (Normative Reference 2.8) is to be used in conjunction with the applicable Part 1 standard for electrical equipment for laboratory use (Normative Reference 2.7).