

# Testing Times

Electrical &amp; Mechanical Commissioning, Testing, Power System Studies

Fall 2008

## Need a Qualified Testing Firm?

Often engineering firms and owners specify testing firm associations as a qualifications requirement in the procurement process. Many contractors, owners, and engineers are familiar with these organization names and their perceived value, although they may not have a true understanding of the limits these memberships bring to the project.

**NETA—InterNational Electrical Testing Association.** NETA is a self-governed association of electrical testing firms whose member firms must meet certain criteria. Some of the qualifications for membership require that a firm:

- Is a full-service electrical testing and maintenance company
- Has been in business for at least two years
- Has a Registered Professional Engineer on staff or under contract
- Must have two or 25% of their field technicians meet the requirements for Level III certification
- Must operate from an established location
- Must be corporately and financially independent so it can function as an unbiased testing authority

A testing firm must first become a full NETA member before its



**Testing firm organizations do not necessarily include all qualified testing companies**

personnel can take the NETA exams for certification. Non-member firms' employees are not eligible to take the NETA certification exams.

Hood-Patterson & Dewar (H-P&D) is an electrical testing firm owned by Patterson & Dewar Engineers, a consulting firm for electrical utilities, cooperatives and municipalities. Although Hood-Patterson & Dewar meets all the requirements listed above, NETA perceives us too closely tied to our parent company to be deemed "independent"; therefore, we are unable to become a NETA member regardless of our technical qualifications.

**NICET—National Institute for Certification in Engineering Technologies.** NICET is an organization under the auspices

of the National Society of Professional Engineers (NSPE). NICET offers exams to individuals in civil, electrical and mechanical engineering. Prior to 2006, NICET offered an electrical testing certification exam. They have discontinued this exam with no timetable for its availability. Anyone with previous NICET electrical testing certification can maintain their certification through a two year continuing education process; however, no new certification is available.

A recently viewed spec calls for **all** on-site personnel to be NICET certified. **NICET only certifies individuals**; a firm cannot be a NICET firm, nor is it likely that any firm has all of its personnel NICET certified since it has been discontinued for the last 3 years. H-P&D currently has two certified NICET test personnel.

**NRTL—Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory.** An NRTL is an organization that OSHA has recognized as meeting the legal requirements in 29 CFR 1910.7. These requirements include capability, control programs, complete independence, and reporting and complaint handling procedures to test and certify specific types of products for workplace safety. An example of

**Hood • Patterson & Dewar, Inc.**

Engineering • Commissioning • Testing  
850 Center Way • Norcross, GA 30071

Telephone (770) 453-1415 • Fax (770) 453-1416

www.hoodpd.com



an NRTL is Underwriters Laboratory (UL). This qualification is geared toward product safety labeling and not field startup testing. Currently, no electrical field testing firms are NRTL firms. The NRTL standard, when used as a field testing firm requirement, is a misapplication of this standard.

**What does all this mean?** It means that there can be qualified electrical testing firms, like Hood-Patterson & Dewar, that are **excluded** from testing because these three organizations are specified as the determining qualification. Hood-Patterson & Dewar's employees include registered Professional Engineers (PEs), graduate engineers and career test technicians. Our personnel meet or exceed the technical requirements for the above referenced organizations. For example, the NETA full member requirements call for the firm to have a professional engineer on staff or under contract to review reports and power system studies. H-P&D currently has 10 full time PEs who review reports, perform field testing, and conduct & review power system studies.

Many specifiers use standard purchased specs that reference these organizations (NETA, NICET, NRTL) as a way to achieve a level of competence in their testing firm qualifications. Unfortunately, the spec may not allow a fully competent firm to submit a price if

they are not a NETA member firm (many of us aren't allowed to join), do not have all NICET certified personnel (not possible today as NICET certification has been discontinued), or are not an NRTL (not an applicable spec to field testing qualifications).

So what can you specify in lieu of these organizations to get a qualified testing firm? You can specify a firm that **meets** NETA technical qualifications or include the following requirements. "A qualified testing firm shall:

- Be a full-service electrical testing company
- Have been in business for at least 10 years
- Have a Registered Professional Engineer on staff
- Have two (or 25% of) field technicians that meet the requirements for Level III NETA/NICET certification
- Be corporately and financially independent from the **project design, installation and equipment** so it can function as an unbiased testing authority."

This spec will give you access to more qualified electrical testing firms without precluding companies who cannot join any of these groups. ♦

## Newsletter Name Contest Winner!

We have chosen a new name thanks to input from our readers. Our new newsletter name is... *Testing Times*. As several of you pointed out, the *Testing Times* newsletter has been around for 15 years and is well recognized in the industry. We will continue to bring you articles and information that reflect all of our services. The winner of the contest is Suzanne Sadow of Wayne G. Griffin Electric, Inc. in Holliston, MA. She very eloquently suggested we continue to use our established name. She has received a \$50.00 American Express gift card as a token of our appreciation.

Hood-Patterson & Dewar, Inc.  
850 Center Way  
Norcross, GA 30071



### inside:

- Need a Qualified Testing Firm?
- Newsletter Name Contest