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U.S. Department of Homeland Security Adopts INCITS Biometric Standard

INCITS 385-2004 Standard was developed by INCITS M1 - Biometrics Technical Committee

Washington, DC, December 23, 2004 - The U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) recently announced the adoption of its first biometric facial recognition standard. The standard (INCITS 385-2004), was developed by the InterNational Committee for Information Technology Standards (INCITS) through the work of the INCITS M1 – Biometrics Technical Committee.

INCITS 385-2004 is designed to assist federal agencies, state and local officials, vendors, and travelers in producing photographs that will be accepted for use in travel documents. It specifies definitions of photographic properties, digital image attributes, and a standards format for relevant applications, including human examination and computer automated face recognition. INCITS announced in July 2004 that INCITS 385-2004 had been approved along with four other data interchange format standards. INCITS M1 – Biometrics has been engaged in developing a series of biometrics standards for biometric data interchange formats, common biometric file formats, biometric application program interfaces, biometric application profiles, biometric performance testing and reporting, and biometric conformance testing methodologies.

In announcing the adoption of the standard on October 27, 2004, Dr. Charles McQueary, Under Secretary for Science and Technology stated, "Secretary Ridge and I are pleased to release the Department's biometric standard face recognition formats today," said. "This standard will enable the free interchange of digitally stored photographs, regardless of what equipment is used to take the display images." Under Secretary Asa Hutchinson added that, "The Department, through the US-VISIT Program, has already moved forward with extensive work on biometrics and facial recognition standards. This development will ensure that images meet a quality standard for facial recognition that is essential for the success of Homeland Security programs." The U.S. Department of Homeland Security also stated in their announcement that "Homeland Security and its partners will continue to work on a regular basis with INCITS to revise these standards as biometric technology evolves."

“The adoption of INCITS 385-2004 by the Department of Homeland Security is an important milestone in the development of biometric standards,” said Fernando Podio, Chair of INCITS M1 - Biometrics Technical Committee. Podio, on the staff of the Computer Security Division in the Information Technology Laboratory at the Commerce Department’s National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST), is responsible for NIST’s biometrics standards program. “I am very pleased that this standard will support such important applications in the department. The Department of Homeland Security, as well as many other private and public entities and agencies have been very involved in the development of this and other approved biometric standards. This type of participation and energy put in the development of consensus-based standards is very encouraging,” Podio said.

INCITS 385-2004 can be obtained through the INCITS Web site <http://www.incits.org/>. More information on INCITS and INCITS M1 – Biometrics may also be obtained from the INCITS Web site.

About INCITS

The mission of the InterNational Committee for Information Technology Standards (INCITS) is to promote the effective use of Information and Communication Technology through standardization in a way that balances the interests of all stakeholders and increases the global competitiveness of the member organizations. INCITS serves as the U.S. Technical Advisory Group for ISO/IEC Joint Technical Committee 1, which is responsible for international standardization in the field of information technology.

INCITS and the Information Technology Industry Council (ITI) are jointly accredited by, and operate under rules approved by, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI). These rules are designed to ensure that voluntary standards are developed by the consensus of directly and materially affected interests. For further information, please contact INCITS, 1250 Eye St. NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20005 (www.incits.org).

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