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ASHRAE STANDARD

BACnet®

A Data Communication Protocol for Building Automation and Control Networks

See the History of Revisions at the end of this standard for approval dates by the ASHRAE Standards Committee, the ASHRAE Board of Directors, and the American National Standards Institute.

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FOREWORD

BACnet, the ASHRAE building automation and control networking protocol, has been designed specifically to meet the communication needs of building automation and control systems for applications such as heating, ventilating, and air-conditioning control, lighting control, access control, and fire detection systems. The BACnet protocol provides mechanisms by which computerized equipment of arbitrary function may exchange information, regardless of the particular building service it performs. As a result, the BACnet protocol may be used by head-end computers, general-purpose direct digital controllers, and application specific or unitary controllers with equal effect.

The motivation for this Standard was the widespread desire of building owners and operators for "interoperability," the ability to integrate equipment from different vendors into a coherent automation and control system - and to do so competitively. To accomplish this, the Standard Project Committee (SPC) solicited and received input from dozens of interested firms and individuals; reviewed all relevant national and international data communications standards, whether de facto or the result of committee activity; and spent countless hours in debate and discussion of the pros and cons of each element of the protocol.

What has emerged from the committee deliberations is a network protocol model with these principal characteristics:

(a) All network devices (except MS/TP slaves) are peers, but certain peers may have greater privileges and responsibilities than others.

(b) Each network device is modeled as a collection of network-accessible, named entities called "objects." Each object is characterized by a set of attributes or "properties." While this Standard prescribes the most widely applicable object types and their properties, implementors are free to create additional object types if desired. Because the object model can be easily extended, it provides a way for BACnet to evolve in a backward compatible manner as the technology and building needs change.

(c) Communication is accomplished by reading and writing the properties of particular objects and by the mutually acceptable execution of other protocol "services." While this Standard prescribes a comprehensive set of services, mechanisms are also provided for implementors to create additional services if desired.

(d) Because of this Standard's adherence to the ISO concept of a "layered" communication architecture, the same messages may be exchanged using various network access methods and physical media. This means that BACnet networks may be configured to meet a range of speed and throughput requirements with commensurately varying cost. Multiple BACnet networks can be interconnected within the same system forming an internetwork of arbitrarily large size. This flexibility also provides a way for BACnet to embrace new networking technologies as they are developed.

BACnet was designed to gracefully improve and evolve as both computer technology and demands of building automation systems change. Upon its original publication in 1995, a Standing Standards Project Committee was formed to deliberate enhancements to the protocol under ASHRAE rules for "continuous maintenance." Much has happened since the BACnet standard was first promulgated. BACnet has been translated into Chinese, Japanese, and Korean, and embraced across the globe. BACnet devices have been designed, built and deployed on all seven continents. Suggestions for enhancements and improvements have been continually received, deliberated, and, ultimately, subjected to the same consensus process that produced the original standard. This publication is the result of those deliberations and brings together all of the corrections, refinements, and improvements that have been adopted.

Among the features that have been added to BACnet are: increased capabilities to interconnect systems across wide area networks using internet protocols, new objects and services to support fire detection and other life safety applications, capabilities to backup and restore devices, standard ways to collect trend data, new tools to make specifying BACnet systems easier, a mechanism for making interoperable extensions to the standard visible, and many others. The successful addition of these features demonstrates that the concept of a protocol deliberately crafted to permit extension of its capabilities over time as technology and needs change is viable and sound.

All communication protocols are, in the end, a collection of arbitrary solutions to the problems of information exchange and all are subject to change as time and technology advance. BACnet is no exception. Still, it is the hope of those who have contributed their time, energies, and talents to this work that BACnet will help to fulfill, in the area of building automation and control, the promise of the information age for the public good!

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1 PURPOSE

The purpose of this standard is to define data communication services and protocols for computer equipment used for monitoring and control of HVAC&R and other building systems and to define, in addition, an abstract, object-oriented representation of information communicated between such equipment, thereby facilitating the application and use of digital control technology in buildings.

2 SCOPE

2.1 This protocol provides a comprehensive set of messages for conveying encoded binary, analog, and alphanumeric data between devices including, but not limited to:

(a) hardware binary input and output values,
(b) hardware analog input and output values,
(c) software binary and analog values,
(d) text string values,
(e) schedule information,
(f) alarm and event information,
(g) files, and
(h) control logic.

2.2 This protocol models each building automation and control computer as a collection of data structures called "objects," the properties of which represent various aspects of the hardware, software, and operation of the device. These objects provide a means of identifying and accessing information without requiring knowledge of the details of the device's internal design or configuration.

3 DEFINITIONS

3.1 Terms Adopted from International Standards

The following terms used in this standard are defined by international standards or draft standards for open system interconnection (OSI). The definitions are repeated here and a reference to the appropriate standard is provided. Clause 25 contains the titles of all national and international standards referenced in this clause and elsewhere in this standard. Words or phrases in italics refer to terms defined elsewhere in this clause.

abstract syntax: the specification of application layer data or *application-protocol-control-information* by using notation rules which are independent of the encoding technique used to represent them (ISO 8822).

application: a set of a USER's information processing requirements (ISO 8649).

application-entity: the aspects of an *application-process* pertinent to OSI (ISO 7498).

application-process: an element within a *real open system* which performs the information processing for a particular *application* (ISO 7498).

application-protocol-control-information: information exchanged between *application-entities*, using presentation services, to coordinate their joint operation (ISO 9545).

application-protocol-data-unit: a unit of data specified in an application protocol and consisting of *application-protocol-control-information* and possibly application-user-data (ISO 9545).

application-service-element: that part of an *application-entity* which provides an OSI environment capability, using underlying services when appropriate (ISO 7498).

concrete syntax: those aspects of the rules used in the formal specification of data which embody a specific representation of that data (ISO 7498).