

High Tech Device helps USBC advance Pin Testing

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USBC Specs



The United States Bowling Congress has adopted a new specification on bowling pins to help ensure the standardization and integrity of one of the chief pieces of equipment used in the sport of bowling.

Beginning June 1, USBC will use a high-tech device to test the outer materials of bowling pins. USBC research engineers will use an optical instrument with a computer interface - called a **Fourier Transform Infrared Spectrometer** - to measure and identify the chemical structure of wood and synthetic bowling pin sample materials sent annually to USBC by various bowling pin manufacturers.

For the test, a tiny sample of the material is placed under a sensor and the data is digitally displayed on the screen of a connected computer.

The three materials that are tested - the outside clear coat, pin coating and base material - must maintain at least a 98 percent correlation from the original samples for the manufacturer to retain a permit and continue making that pin for USBC competition. Only bowling pins meeting USBC specifications may be used in USBC-certified competition.

"This is a powerful, high tech tool that gives us a very precise 'fingerprint' of each bowling pin sample to make sure the same material is used each time in the construction of the pins," said Bob Roloff, a USBC research engineer and chemist. "That helps ensure that bowling pins used in all USBC competition are produced consistently, which in turn helps protect the credibility of the sport."

The adoption of the new specification and testing procedure was formally approved during a meeting of the USBC Equipment Specifications and Certification Committee April 28 in Greendale, Wis. That committee makes all final decisions on USBC specifications.

In addition to bowling pins, this infrared technology could possibly be used to assist USBC in the testing of bowling ball cover stocks, lane surfaces, lane oils and lane cleaners.

"This is an exciting time for us as this is the first step toward adopting many future specifications in this area," said USBC Technical Director Neil Stremmel.