

Year 2000 Ready:

by Paula Barker

"A product is Year 2000 ready if the product, when used in accordance with its associated documentation, is capable of correctly processing, providing and/or receiving date data within and between the 20th and 21st centuries, provided that all other products (for example, software, hardware and firmware) used with the product properly exchange accurate date data with it."

Definition in the literature of one of America's larger computer companies

Year 2000 Compliant, however, has not been defined, as no standards for compliance have actually been adopted.

With the Year 2000 moving closer, the Equipment Manufacturing Center (EMC) is doing its part to achieve Y2K readiness for its gas distribution system equipment. Product Engineering Manager of EMC, Bob Irwin, is working with the Air Liquide America Y2K coordinators Paul Jaeger (Air Liquide America Corp.) and Robert Olds (US Electronics), to help meet Sematech protocols. These include provisions for *work-arounds*, or methods to overcome date-related issues.

SEMATECH (SEmiconductor MAnufacturing TECHnology) is a non-profit technology development consortium of U.S. semiconductor manufacturers formed in 1987. Partnerships are formed with members, equipment and material suppliers, national laboratories and other consortia. Their role with regards to supplier Y2K readiness is technical support, providing various materials as guidelines only. EMC has adopted their *Year 2000 Readiness Test Scenarios*, to evaluate our equipment and to determine what upgrades, if any, are necessary for the year 2000. This document can be downloaded from SEMATECH's website, www.sematech.org, upon acceptance of the licensing agreement.

Air Liquide America has contracted with a third party to conduct the testing of EMC equipment using the SEMATECH guidelines and to prepare reports of the test results.

An information package, including the results of the testing, will be sent to all EMC customers within the next couple weeks. The sales force will receive copies of the information package to ensure a consistent message is given to our customers. Any request for data or reports must be routed to Paul Jaeger, in Houston. ◀

PRIMARY DATES OF CONCERN FOR TESTING Y2K READINESS:

December 31, 1999 to January 1, 2000 (century change)
February 28, 2000 to February 29, 2000 (leap day)
February 29, 1000 to March 1, 2000 (leap day + 1)
December 31, 1998 to January 1, 1999 (no longer applicable)
December 31, 2000 to January 1, 2001
September 8, 1999 to September 9, 1999

ADDITIONAL DATES OF CONCERN (COULD PRESENT PROBLEMS WITH INTERNAL BUSINESS SYSTEMS):

April 9, 1999	- 99 th day of 99 th year (may have Julian date implications)
January 10, 2000	- first time seven positions is required to represent the date
October 10, 2000	- first time eight positions is required to represent the date
January 1, 2011	- some Microsoft application products will fail due to the method used to resolve YEAR 2000 issues. (i.e., year>10 assumed to be in 20 th century)
January 1, 2030	- some commercial products will fail due to the method used to resolve YEAR 2000 issues. (i.e., year>29 assumed to be in 20 th century)
January 19, 2038	- many UNIX-based products will fail

YEAR 2000 LEGISLATION and the SEMICONDUCTOR INDUSTRY

SEMI has recently reported their support of critical Year 2000 legislation now before the House and Senate: the *Year 2000 Readiness and Responsibility Act* (H.R. 775) and the *Y2K Liability Bill* (S. 96). The bills protect defendants if they have taken reasonable steps to prevent Y2K problems, screening out petty lawsuits, yet protecting the rights of truly injured plaintiffs.

We contacted Vicki Hadfield of SEMI, Washington D.C. regarding Bill S. 96: "...from the vantage point of the high tech coalition SEMI is a part of, we think the leaner version of the bill sponsored by the Democrats would be acceptable and could stem the tide of frivolous lawsuits we have been concerned about." However, on 4/29/99, vote for cloture on this bill failed, while on 5/12/99, bill H.R. 775 passed the House and is now before the Senate.

Both House and Senate bills preserve provisions important to the semiconductor industry, including a 90-day cooling off period, a heightened pleading standard, material injury requirement in class actions, and proportionate liability reform.

Suggested points to convey to Senators—both bills:

- encourage businesses to fix Y2K problems without concerns for unlimited and unwarranted liability
- discourage frivolous litigation, but do not preclude legitimate claims for injuries
- encourage resolution of disputes before the contentiousness and expense of litigation
- are supported by all sectors of the business community including plaintiffs and defendants and large and small companies

Within the talking points prepared by Semiconductor Industry Association lobbyist, Ann Craib, is a report of over 500 law firms gearing up for the anticipated assault of liability suits. Craib states "...litigation burden is likely to fall on the high-tech, high-growth sector of the economy...the economic impact of Y2K litigation could be more substantial than the Y2K disruptions themselves."

Passage of Y2K legislation should allow SEMI members to focus more on the prevention of Y2K issues, and less on warding off superficial lawsuits.