



## Changes to the IPC effective from January 2011

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### A B S T R A C T

#### Keywords:

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On January 1, 2011, some changes to the International Patent Classification (IPC) scheme entered into force. The most significant impact on the structure of the IPC is that it no longer has a "core" and an "advanced" level. Only one text of the IPC is currently published, corresponding to the former advanced level. Small patent offices have the option to classify using main groups only instead of the former core level. A second change, already introduced on January 2010, was to abandon the difference between the three-month (advanced level) or three-year (core level) rhythm for revisions to the IPC, replacing it with an annual revision, in January of each year.

In addition to these functional changes, the schemes were revised in a number of technical areas.

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### 1. Reasons for a simplification of the IPC structure

When the Reform of the IPC was planned, one of its goals was to provide suitable classification schemes for small intellectual property offices as well as for large offices [1]. Especially in order to cater to the needs of small offices, the "core level", a subset of the full IPC ("advanced level") was created [2,3]. Practice has shown that since the introduction of the reformed IPC in January 2006, only a very small number of offices have actually made use of the option to classify in the core level. The maintenance of the two-level system however was found to be quite cumbersome.

The different frequencies for the revision of the two levels also led to some lack of clarity as well as an administrative burden without additional benefit.

### 2. Principles

Starting on January 1, 2011, the maintenance of two separate and autonomous levels of the IPC, i.e. of the core and of the advanced levels, was discontinued. This means that, like before the IPC reform, only one single text of the IPC is maintained and published. The scheme of this "new" IPC actually corresponds to the former advanced level. The terms "core level" and "advanced level" were perceived as confusing by some users, mainly because the group

symbols, which were listed in the core level scheme could also be used as "advanced level" classifications, since the advanced level was designed to be a superset of the core level. Additionally, titles, references, notes, definitions and version indicators had to be maintained separately, leading to additional effort for WIPO and for Intellectual Property offices. In the current system, these elements of the scheme are the same whether the full text of the Classification is displayed or a part of it (e.g. main groups only).

While there were some differences in the classification rules between core and advanced level in the past, common rules for classification now apply to all users of the IPC.

Small Offices with limited resources or expertise for classification may, however, classify their documents either at subclass level [4] or using only the main groups of the IPC. When an Office uses only main groups to classify its published documents, these symbols will be considered as "complete symbols" in the sense of the Strasbourg Agreement, i.e. these offices still fulfill their obligations as foreseen in Article 4(3) of that Agreement. On the other hand, those Offices whose patent collections belong to the PCT minimum documentation are expected to use the full Classification (i.e. corresponding to the former advanced level). Offices have been requested to notify the International Bureau (IB) of WIPO whether they classify using subclass, main groups only or the complete Classification. WIPO will publish a list, regularly updated, indicating the level of use [5].

### 3. Publication

The IPC will now be published once a year in electronic form only [6]. In exceptional cases, e.g. when there is a high number of

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IPC revisions to be published, the IPC Committee of Experts may decide to increase publications to twice yearly.

There is no longer a paper publication of the IPC, but a “PDF” version is available allowing users to produce their own paper versions where needed [7]. Only one version of the master and “PDF” files is published, corresponding to the full IPC.

For yearly publication the date of entry in force is January 1.

Six months before entry in force, the following products are made available by WIPO in order to allow the timely preparation of national versions of the Classification, of the Working Lists and the subsequent reclassification:

- The IPC scheme itself, as an XML master file.
- The Revision Concordance List (RCL), linking revised/deleted symbols of the old IPC version to their corresponding entries in the new version.
- The Compilation file, listing all IPC scheme changes between two successive versions.
- The validity file, containing a comprehensive list of all IPC symbols of the current version and of all earlier versions in XML format, for use in validation routines of IT systems.
- The early Internet publication of the scheme, the RCL and the Compilation, in both official languages.

#### 4. New publication platform

In order to accommodate the published IPC to the changes described above, a new publication platform was developed [6]. The new platform was developed using up-to-date technology, is more user-friendly and has new features. The distinction between the core and advanced levels was removed from all editions. The top part allows selection of IPC notions (scheme, Catchword Index, RCL, etc.) while the left part contains all the display options and search features. Definitions and illustrations open independent windows, allowing their simultaneous display with the scheme (Fig. 1).

Among the new features introduced, the search function is the most important. It allows search in the scheme, in the Catchword Index or in the Definitions. Other features include the possibility for corrigendum, warnings, indicating incomplete reclassification or other information by IP authorities and direct access to PDF display in “printed-like” form.

#### 5. IPC revision and its relation with the IP5 common hybrid classification project

The five large intellectual property offices in the world (EPO, USPTO, JPO, KIPO and SIPO) agreed some time ago to a

This site is the IPC internet publication as from IPC version 2011.01.  
See main changes associated to this version

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WORLD INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY ORGANIZATION

IPC Home Page - Help

Version: 2011.01  
Current symbol: B60R 21/01  
Go to

Language: English (selected), French, English/French

View mode: path, full, hierarchic (selected)

Standardized sequence: ☐  
Deleted entries: ☒  
Subclass indexes: ☐  
Guidance Headings: ☒  
Notes: ☒

Search: Terms, Cross-references, Fuzzy (TACS)

Assistance: Text categorization (IPCCAT)

Number of displayed entries: 500

ipcpubprep version 2.02  
Last modified: 2011.02.08

**SECTION B — PERFORMING OPERATIONS; TRANSPORTING**

**TRANSPORTING**

**B60 VEHICLES IN GENERAL**

Note(s)  
In this class, the following term is used with the meaning indicated:

- “vehicle” means all vehicles except those restricted to one of the following types of vehicles: rail vehicles, waterborne vessels, carts, cycles, animal-drawn vehicles, and sledges, which are covered by the relevant subclasses of B61-B64.
- Thus the term “vehicle” includes:
- vehicular **characteristics** which are common to more than one of the above-listed types;
- certain **characteristics** restricted to automobiles, road or cross-country trailers.

The following exceptions to the above should be noted:

- subclass B60B or B60C embrace all vehicle wheels and tyres, except wheels for roller skates A63C 17/22, wheels for motor vehicles and special **adaptations** of wheels or tyres for aircraft B64C 25/36;
- subclass B60C embraces the connection of valves to inflatable elastic bodies in general, and in this respect it is not limited to inflatable elastic bodies;
- subclass B60L embraces certain electric equipment of all electrically-propelled vehicles;
- subclass B60M embraces certain power supply equipment for, but external to, any kind of electrically-propelled vehicle;
- subclass B60R embraces safety belts or body harnesses used in all types of land vehicles; [4]
- subclass B60S relates to all kinds of vehicles, except the servicing of rail locomotives B61K 11/00, ground equipment for apparatus peculiar to waterborne vessels B63B 57/00, B63B 59/00;
- subclass B60T includes brake **control** systems of general applicability, and in this respect it is not limited to vehicles. It embraces power-brake systems and some other **features** of rail-vehicle brake systems;
- subclass B60V embraces air-cushion vehicles **per se** and land vehicles, waterborne vessels or aircraft combined with air-cushion vehicles or to be partially supported by an air cushion. [2009.01]

**B60R VEHICLES, VEHICLE FITTINGS, OR VEHICLE PARTS, NOT OTHERWISE PROVIDED FOR** (fire prevention, construction adapted for vehicles A62C 3/07)

Note(s)  
Attention is drawn to the Note following the title of class B60.

**B60R 21/00 Arrangements or fittings on vehicles for protecting or preventing injuries to occupants or pedestrians in case of accidents or other transport risks or emergency escape**

**B60R 21/01** • Electrical circuits for triggering safety arrangements in case of vehicle accidents or impending vehicle accidents [7]

**B60R 21/02** • Occupant safety arrangements or fittings [4]

**B60R 21/34** • Protecting non-occupants of a vehicle, e.g. pedestrians [2011.01]

Fig. 1. Display of the IPC on the new publication platform <http://www.wipo.int/ipcpub>.

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