INTERPRETATION IC 135-2012-18 OF
ANSI/ASHRAE STANDARD 135-2012 BACnet® -
A Data Communication Protocol for Building
Automation and Control Networks

Approval Date: November 4, 2015


Reference: This request for interpretation refers to the requirements presented in
ANSI/ASHRAE Standard 135-2012, Clause 13.14, regarding SubscribeCOV service with
indefinite lifetime.

Background:

There is a form of the SubscribeCOV service that has an indefinite lifetime. This is indicated by
either an absent ‘lifetime’ parameter or a value of zero conveyed in the ‘lifetime’ parameter.

Support for this form of the service is optional. If, for example, a server does not have non-
volatile storage, the use of an indefinite lifetime makes no sense as the subscription will be
erased upon reboot. In this case, it’s likely that the client will never re-subscribe for the value.

However, the service procedure for the SubscribeCOV service doesn’t clearly state that support
for the indefinite lifetime form of the service is optional.

There are two places outside of the service procedure that state indefinite lifetime subscriptions
are optional. The first is found in the DS-COV-A/B BIBBs in K.1.11 and K.1.12. The second is
found in section 7.6 of the BTL Implementation Guideline v0.42 that advises against using the
indefinite lifetime form altogether. Client implementers who have read neither the BTL
document nor the description of the COV BIBBs will incorrectly assume that support for
indefinite lifetime subscriptions is mandatory. This leads to an interoperability problem if the
client implementation cannot (or will not) fall back to limited subscription times and/or polling
for data.

Further, the standard does not state which error codes should be returned when an
implementation does not support COV subscriptions with an indefinite lifetime. While not part
of this interpretation request, those error classes and codes should also be specified by the
standard.

Interpretation: Server side support for SubscribeCOV requests with indefinite lifetimes is
optional and servers that do not support this form of the service should return a Result(-) if this
form is not supported.

Question: Is this Interpretation correct?

Answer: Yes
Comments: Clause K.1.12 clearly states that support for subscription of indefinite lifetime is optional in servers. If indefinite lifetime is not supported, a Result(-) with an 'Error Class' of SEVICES and an 'Error Code' of VALUE_OUT_OF_RANGE is expected to be returned. See Clause 13.14.1.3.1 Error Type.