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# Future Trends in EMC Regulation



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# Emerging Challenges and Shifts in EMC Regulation

The pace of technological advancement consistently outstrips the evolution of regulatory frameworks. While most existing EMC rules were crafted with traditional electronics in mind, today's devices are far more complex.

Modern designs often integrate multiple radios, wideband data interfaces, and high-speed switching into incredibly compact form factors, leading to significantly more intricate emissions profiles.

If your product's development timeline spans 18 to 24 months or more, there's a good chance the EMC landscape will shift before your product hits the market.

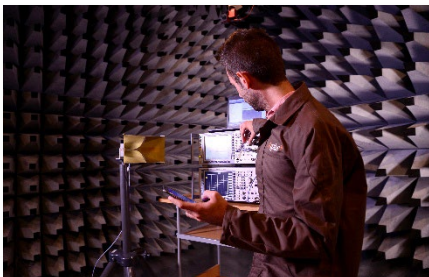
Failing to anticipate these changes can result in costly redesigns or retests just to achieve compliance. Staying ahead of evolving FCC, CE, and ICES requirements isn't just smart; it's essential for long-lifecycle products and international launches.

## 5G and Millimeter-Wave Paradigm Shift

5G, particularly in its millimeter-wave (24 GHz to 40 GHz) implementations, introduces an entirely new RF paradigm. We've observed devices failing emissions tests simply because advanced beamforming antennas steered power in unexpected ways.

The shift is driven by wider bandwidths and adaptive RF front ends. This ultimately increases the risk of interference, especially in high-density urban environments.

Testing remains fragmented, with U.S. devices falling under FCC Part 15 and EU products adhering to EN 301 908 and other ETSI specifications; harmonization is an ongoing effort. Furthermore, immunity is more critical than ever, as dynamic spectrum access and adaptive modulation schemes make these devices less predictable under stress, a challenge EN 55035 aims to address.



*"The 5G shift has blurred the traditional 'design, then test' model. Now, test methods, standards, and product technology are all evolving in parallel. It's pushing the entire industry to work together more closely than ever to navigate this dynamic landscape."* **Applus+ Keystone Engineer**

## Electric Vehicles and Evolving EMC Challenges

Electric vehicles (EVs) are far more than just cars with batteries; they represent complex electrical ecosystems that introduce novel EMC challenges.

You've likely encountered this firsthand.



DC/DC converters generating noise well into the MHz range, or battery management systems injecting interference onto CAN lines. The emissions spectrum now extends from 150 kHz to over 1 GHz, driven by fast-switching IGBTs and SiC MOSFETs.

Regulatory focus is broadening to include conducted noise on DC lines and low-frequency magnetic emissions, which could potentially interfere with safety systems or even affect passengers.

Standards like CISPR 25, ISO 11452, and UNECE R10 are continually updated to reflect the evolving realities of EV platforms. It's worth noting that a DC-DC module compliant with Europe's R10 might still be flagged under FCC Part 18 in the U.S., particularly if classified as industrial equipment.

## Industrial Automation and Sector-Specific EMC Standards

Industrial automation, with its smart factories, real-time Ethernet, PLCs, RF sensors, motor drives, and AI-based controllers, presents an increasingly complex and critical EMC environment.

New EMC requirements are emerging for deterministic protocols like PROFINET and EtherCAT, where even a single lost packet can halt a production line. Immunity standards are tightening, especially against electrostatic discharge (ESD) and radiated RF fields.

This increasing complexity is driving a shift toward more rigorous test methodologies, including real-time monitoring of network traffic and emissions during actual factory operations. As manufacturing environments become more interconnected, the risk of EMI-induced downtime or safety hazards is amplifying, making robust EMC controls a top priority for industrial stakeholders.

The traditional one-size-fits-all EMC standards (e.g., IEC 61000-6-1 or -6-3) are giving way to sector-specific rules, such as IEC 61000-6-2 for heavy industrial settings.



## AI-Driven Machines and Operational Variability

Unlike traditional equipment with fixed operating states, AI-powered continuously adjust their functions in response to real-time data from cameras, LIDAR, pressure sensors, or environmental monitors.

For example, when a robotic arm switches from a low-power standby mode to full-speed material handling triggered by a sensor, the internal power electronics, communication buses, and RF transmitters may all ramp up activity. This shift can dramatically alter the emission profile, potentially introducing unexpected spikes or new frequencies that were absent during idle testing.

Comprehensive EMC validation for AI-driven machines requires a methodical approach. Test plans must include all expected operational states, transitions between states, and even stress conditions like sensor faults or rapid mode switching.

By validating EMC across every operational mode, organizations can prevent costly failures, recalls, or safety incidents stemming from unforeseen interference.

AI algorithms often employ dynamic resource allocation, meaning that processor cores, memory, and wireless modules can be activated or deactivated on demand. This creates a moving target for EMC engineers, as the worst-case electromagnetic interference (EMI) may only occur during specific, infrequent operational scenarios.

## IoT Devices and Unexpected Emissions

IoT devices, despite their small form factors, often present significant EMC challenges. Their compact designs frequently lead to tight ground planes and mixed-signal ICs squeezed next to noisy switching power supplies, often resulting in unexpected emission peaks.

Key EMC issues include poor shielding on fast digital buses and ADCs, which become unintentional radiators, and intermodulation emissions from multiple integrated radios (e.g., BLE + Wi-Fi + Zigbee) that may not be obvious in early tests.

Even battery-powered devices in low-power sleep modes must still meet radiated limits like FCC Part 15.109 and EN 55032.

A persistent myth that trips up teams is the belief that a certified module covers the entire host device. Modular approvals do not automatically extend to the host device's full EMI profile, especially if RF traces have been re-routed or antennas changed.



## Green Technology, Renewables, and Power Quality

Green technology and renewables, such as solar inverters and EV chargers, might appear "quiet" due to their solid-state nature, but in practice, they generate substantial switching noise, often within sensitive frequency bands.

Trends we are closely monitoring include grid-connected equipment that must now satisfy both EMC and power quality requirements, necessitating adherence to harmonic limits like IEC 61000-3-2 and ensuring Power Factor Correction (PFC) stability under various load conditions.



In the U.S., FCC Part 18 applies to many of these industrial-class systems, particularly those utilizing inductive charging or high-voltage switching. Off-grid and hybrid systems are also facing increased scrutiny where EMC overlaps with critical grid control and safety functions.



## Future-Proofing EMC Compliance Strategies

So, how do you design for standards that haven't fully materialized yet?

### Track the Committees

Staying ahead of evolving EMC requirements starts with diligent monitoring of standards bodies and their activities. Organizations such as CISPR, IEC TC77, and ETSI ERM frequently release draft revisions and updates years before these changes become mandatory.

Actively tracking these publications, subscribe to industry newsletters, or engage with specialized EMC consultants ensures your organization is informed about emerging standards.

### Design with Headroom

If your device is just 2 dB below the current limit, you may find yourself non-compliant as standards tighten or as your product's environment changes. Instead, target a substantial margin, typically 10 to 20 dB below regulatory thresholds.

This buffer not only accommodates evolving standards but also accounts for manufacturing variations, aging components, and unpredictable installation environments.



## Select the Right Test Lab

Choosing a test laboratory is more than a box-ticking exercise; the right lab partners can help you anticipate future compliance issues. Labs with demonstrated expertise in emerging sectors such as 5G communications, electric vehicles (EVs), and the Internet of Things (IoT) bring valuable insights into upcoming regulatory trends and technical challenges.

When evaluating labs, ask about their experience with evolving standards and new technologies. Their knowledge can help you identify and address vulnerabilities early, streamlining certification and reducing the risk of delays when standards shift.

## Treat EMC as a Lifecycle Issue

EMC compliance isn't a one-time hurdle, it's an ongoing process that should be woven into your product's entire development roadmap. Integrating EMC design, validation, and documentation from concept through end-of-life ensures sustained compliance and reduces surprises during upgrades or market expansions. By treating EMC as a lifecycle issue, you safeguard your product's reputation and market success for years to come.

# Tomorrow's EMC problems are today's design priorities.

EMC is fundamentally about managing risk. As our systems become faster, denser, and more interconnected, those risks continue to escalate. Whether you're developing a vehicle controller, an AI-powered factory node, or a BLE-enabled thermostat, one truth remains clear: today's EMC margin is tomorrow's necessity.

Therefore, the critical question isn't just, "Do we pass?" but rather, "Will we still pass multiple years from now?" Build for that future now.

## Take the Next Step Toward Lasting EMC Compliance

Proactively address EMC challenges by partnering with Applus+ Keystone and prioritizing compliance throughout your product's lifecycle. Start planning today to ensure your innovations remain compliant and competitive tomorrow.

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