

BANNOCKBURN, IL — North American printed circuit board fabricators saw shipments fall 3.5% year-over-year in January, IPC said today. Bookings rose 6.2% from a year ago.

Rigid PCB shipments were down 3.1%, while bookings increased 10.9%. Flexible circuit shipments fell 7.9% and bookings were down 29.4%. About 59% of the flex board revenue came from assembled boards, IPC said.

The book-to-bill ratios were 1.01 for rigid boards, 1.05 for flex and 1.0 overall. The ratios are calculated by dividing the value of orders booked over the past three months by the value of sales billed during the same period from companies in IPC's survey sample. A ratio of more than 1.0 suggests that current demand is ahead of supply, which is a positive indicator for sales growth over the next two to three months.

"Both rigid PCB and flexible circuit sales followed normal seasonal patterns in January, with sales down from December," said Sharon Starr, IPC market research director. "The good news is that rigid PCB orders are up and the book-to-bill ratios for both rigid and flex improved again this month. They are now just above parity, which suggests a return to modest growth in the new few months."

Rigid PCBs make up an estimated 89% of the PCB industry in North America. Some 82% of total PCB shipments reported were domestically produced.