

RSC Guidance on Product Certification & Certification Marks

This document provides information for factories about certification of products that are required to be reviewed & accepted by the RSC. The process of certification, and product production surveillance is explained, as well as the use and meaning of information on certification marks on products.

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

The product to be certified must be tested in accordance with the methods listed in the specified test standard.

The product certifier then reviews the product supplier's application information, including the testing data. If the certifier's evaluation concludes that the test data shows that the product meets all required criteria as listed in the certification scheme, then the product is deemed "certified" and is listed in a directory which the Product certifier is required to keep.




SURVEILLANCE

Products need periodic recertification, also known as surveillance. This requirement is typically identified within the certification scheme that the product is certified to. Certification bodies may require product suppliers to perform some sort of surveillance activity, such as pulling sample products from the marketplace for testing, in order to maintain their "listed" or "certified" status. Other examples of surveillance activities include surprise audits of the manufacturing plant, supervision of the manufacturing and/or testing process, or a simple paperwork submittal from the supplier to the product certifier to ensure that the certified product has not changed. Other causes for recertification may include complaints issued against the product's functionality which would require removal from the marketplace, and expiration of the original certification. These lists of examples are by no means all inclusive.

CERTIFICATION MARKS

Certified products are typically endorsed with a certification mark provided by the product certifier. When certification marks are issued and used on products, they are usually easy to see and enable users to track down the certification listings to determine the criteria that the product meets, and whether or not the listing is still active.

An active certification listing must minimally include indication of the following information:

-  The specific product or type of product certified
-  The qualification standard that the product is judged to meet
-  The date of certification (and if applicable, its expiration)

Product certifiers may choose to include much more information than that listed above.

These listings are used by the RSC to compare the product's use or installation with the intent of the rating by testing. In order to comply with the RSC Technical Guidelines (Standard), the product listing must be "active", as products and companies can become "de-listed" due to re-testing showing that a product no longer meets qualification criteria, or a business decision by the manufacturer.

A certification listing indicates that the test has been properly conducted, the tested systems passed, and that a follow-up agreement is in effect between the manufacturer or submitter and the certifier. This means that in addition to the original inspection where the test materials were produced, the certifier makes inspections of the manufacturing facility to ensure that what is being manufactured and sold is still the same as what was originally tested.

In the event that irregularities are discovered on the part of the manufacturer - substitutions of cheaper ingredients or components, deliberate irregularities, or a component of a tested system which is no longer available has been substituted - the listing can be de-activated and the manufacturer asked to remove all logos of the certifier from product literature, promotional materials, packaging, etc.



CERTIFICATION MARKS – FAQ

Aren't manufacturers required to use UL for their testing? Isn't this mandated by the standards themselves?

The answer to both questions is "no." In fact, this misconception has misled many people to believe that they don't have a choice in their third-party testing and certification organization. To satisfy the requirement of having products tested by an independent organization, the testing laboratory must be a recognized testing organization and certification body by the RSC. The certification mark serves as proof of product compliance with RSC referenced standards.

Is there a difference between the WH (Intertek), CE, FM, Certifire (Warrington), AENOR, BSI, CSTB and UL Marks?

No. Each mark demonstrates that the product has met the minimum requirements of acceptable standards as determined through independent testing. And, as part of that testing regimen, the manufacturer has agreed to periodic follow-up inspections to verify continued compliance.

What does a certification mark tell me?

Certification marks such as WH, CE, FM, Certifire, AENOR, BSI, CSTB and UL signify that the product has been tested to, and found to comply with a particular standard by a qualified, independent testing laboratory. The presence of a certification mark also means the product is listed in the directory of the laboratory that verified the product's compliance and is part of an on-going follow-up program that ensures the products continued compliance during manufacturing. The listing of products certified by an organization can be found online at the website of the certifying organization.

Who sets the standards?

The RSC Technical Guidelines (Standard) references product test standards from many parts of the world. These standards themselves are developed in different ways. Many are developed through a consensus process that takes into account the viewpoints of manufacturers, the insurance industry, private organizations and the general public. The standards are then sponsored by organizations such as CEN, FM, ASTM and NFPA.

What are examples of certification marks commonly found on construction products?

Among the certification marks commonly found on construction products are the following, provided by the following testing and certification organizations:

- The CE Listed Mark provided by a EU Notified Body (eg. AENOR, BSI, CSTB)
- The WH Listed Mark provided by Intertek
- The UL Listed Mark provided by Underwriters Laboratories
- The FM Listed Mark provided by Factory Mutual
- The Certifire Listed Mark provided by Warrington

If a product has the mark of one of these third party certifiers, will it automatically be accepted by the RSC?

It is important to know that the certification is directly linked to a test standard. The test standard for which the product is certified must be acceptable to the RSC. For instance, doors can be tested and certified for their ability to withstand severe weather. This is not a concern of the RSC, but the fire protection rating of a door is a concern of the RSC. Therefore it is important to check that the product is being certified to the test standard and for the purpose intended by the RSC requirements.

