

FOREIGN STANDARDS OVERVIEW

OVERVIEW

When exporters market their products overseas, they need to meet foreign product standards that may require product testing or a simple in-country registration. For an example of a foreign standard certification, turn over your computer keyboard and you will see several “marks” certifying this electronic product for your market. There are various bodies around the world that require testing and certification on all manner of products for nearly every industry. Product standards are developed by industry associations and enforced by quasi-government organizations. It is not necessarily the function of these organizations to dictate which product or material will be accepted in the local market, but rather to evaluate the product’s performance. Standards testing can be very costly and may need to be done in-country where the product will be sold. Global harmonization of certain product standards, such as restrictions on lead in paint, is designed to protect consumers. However, in some cases standards are a non-tariff barrier to trade due to the cost of compliance and discriminatory treatment of other country’s standards. Many poorer countries that do not have product standards in place will accept U.S., European, or international standards. Technical standards for your specific product are available for a fee (see “Additional Resources” on the last page of this document).

Independent commercial testing and certification laboratories provide the services needed to help you through the labyrinth of foreign standards. Essentially, Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories (NRTL) are accredited facilities conducting tests against the same sets of standards and codes, regardless of who authors or publishes them. This VEDP Fast Fact outlines the certification procedure and some of the key foreign standards regulating the import and sale of goods overseas.

GENERAL CERTIFICATION PROCEDURE

While each country or industry will have its own process to navigate, the general procedure to comply with product certification involves the following steps:

- 1) Determining if your product requires certification by any of the bodies regulating trade in your target market. Check the list of products subject to certification. Is your product exempt?
- 2) Conduct a self-assessment. Purchase the standards and evaluate the specifications needed for your products, components, or parts. Do your products meet the minimum requirements?
- 3) Apply for testing and certification with an accredited organization: Submit your application along with a sample and all necessary documentation as needed. You may need an agent for this step to navigate the in-country process, including any appeals or disputes, and to avoid paying hefty freight, travel, legal, or language translation fees.
- 4) Purchase or print the certification marks (labels) to apply to your product once it has been approved and publicly “listed” by the testing laboratory.
- 5) Supervision after certification: Although similar models of products may not need additional testing, significant product modifications may require re-certification. Some manufacturers choose to conduct in-house quality and standards testing to maintain product certification along with customer satisfaction. These companies need to submit to unannounced inspections and audits to satisfy the testing requirements.

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TESTING AND CERTIFICATION BODIES

The following organizations *develop* standards in conjunction with industry associations and other stakeholders. Their services may also include product testing and certification to the appropriate standards needed for the desired “mark”.

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR STANDARDIZATION (ISO)

ISO is the world's largest developer and publisher of international standards. ISO is a network of the national standards institutes of 162 countries, with a Central Secretariat in Switzerland that coordinates the system. ISO is a non-governmental organization that forms a partnership between the public and private sectors, enabling a consensus on solutions that meet both the requirements of business and the needs of society. Standards, such as the ISO 9000 program, are documented agreements containing technical specifications or other precise criteria to be used consistently as rules, guidelines and definitions to ensure that materials, products, processes and services are in compliance.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF STANDARDS & TECHNOLOGY (NIST)

NIST is a non-regulatory federal agency within the U.S. Department of Commerce's Technology Administration. Their mission is to develop and promote measurements, standards and technology in order to enhance productivity, facilitate trade, and improve quality of life.

AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARDS INSTITUTE (ANSI)

ANSI oversees the creation, promulgation and use of thousands of norms and guidelines that directly impact businesses in nearly every sector. ANSI is also actively engaged in accrediting programs that assess conformance to standards, including globally recognized cross-sector programs such as the ISO 9000 (quality) and ISO 14000 (environmental) management systems.

ASTM INTERNATIONAL

Originally known as the American Society of Testing and Materials, ASTM International is one of the world's largest voluntary standards development organizations and a source for technical standards for materials, products, systems, and services and plays an important role in the information infrastructure that guides design, manufacturing and trade in the global economy. Standards developed at ASTM are the work of over 30,000 ASTM members. These technical experts represent producers, users, consumers, government and academia from over 120 countries and participation is open to all with a material interest.

TECHNISCHER ÜBERWACHUNGS-VEREIN (TÜV)

TÜV is the German “Technical Inspection Association”. TÜV Product Service is an independent organization that provides testing, certification, qualification, training and consultancy services to a range of industries and sectors. TÜV can issue a wide range of internationally-recognized certification marks that will demonstrate products' and services' quality and reliability to customers. TÜV provides certification for international standards, such as ISO9001:2008 (quality management system) and ISO/TS16949 (automotive quality management system).

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KEY PRODUCT MARKS

UNDERWRITERS LABORATORIES: UL MARK

Underwriters Laboratories® is an independent product safety certification organization that tests products and writes standards for safety with a network of service providers including 64 laboratory, testing and certification facilities in 98 countries. UL evaluates more than 19,000 types of products, components, materials and systems annually with 20 billion UL Marks appearing on 72,000 manufacturers' products each year.



CANADIAN STANDARDS ASSOCIATION (CSA) INTERNATIONAL

The CSA develops product standards for the Canadian market. The CSA International division offers product testing and certification services for other international standards.



CHINA COMPULSORY CERTIFICATION: CCC MARK

The China Compulsory Certification (CCC) is a compulsory safety and quality mark for 132 product categories sold in China. In 2002, two compulsory inspection systems, one for quality control (CCIB) and the other for checking product content upon import/export (CCEE), were integrated to form a single procedure under one authority. The China National Regulatory Commission for Certification and Accreditation is responsible for all certification and accreditation matters.



MEXICO: NORMAS OFICIALES MEXICANAS: NOM MARK

Upon Customs clearance, Mexico only recognizes its NOM safety mark for regulated products. The Certificate of Conformity can only be issued by accredited laboratories in-country to individuals or entities with a taxpayer number and domiciled in Mexico.



EUROPEAN UNION: CE MARK

By the year 2004, an estimated half of U.S. exports to the EU bore the CE mark (*Conformité Européenne*). The CE mark indicates that a product has met essential health, safety and performance requirements by design or testing. It is required for a wide range of products, including machinery, electronics, toys, medical devices and telecommunications equipment. There are specific rules for software in data encryption and where databases may be kept. Most companies have to meet CE mark requirements in order to sell their products in the European market. The European Commission describes the CE mark as a "passport" that allows manufacturers to circulate industrial and consumer products freely within the EU.



The information needed to receive a CE Mark and for the declaration of conformity includes:

- Manufacturer's name and address
- Product, model number and variants
- CE mark directives that apply to the product
- European standards used
- Signature of a company official for purposes of the company assuming liability for the safety of its product in the European market (implies liability at the individual, not corporate, level)

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EUROPEAN UNION REGULATIONS

The RoHS, WEEE, and REACH Directives are complex pieces of legislation that apply to the entire EU on many manufactured products and may be imposed differently by country.

RESTRICTION ON HAZARDOUS SUBSTANCES (RoHS)

The European Parliament and the Council of the European Union initiated the Restriction of Hazardous Substances Directive to protect human health and the environment from environmental contamination from manufactured products and residual waste. Since July 1, 2006, the Directive applies to a wide range of manufacturers selling products in Europe. Under the provisions, there are key restrictions on the manufacture of electrical and electronic equipment to avoid the use of hazardous substances, including lead, cadmium, mercury, hexavalent chromium, polybrominated biphenyls (PBB) and polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDE). To comply with the RoHS legislation, all substances must be removed or reduced to within maximum allowable concentrations. In order to receive a Letter of Compliance, manufacturers and their suppliers in the following categories must demonstrate that their products meet the requirements: *Household appliances, consumer equipment, information technology and telecommunication equipment, lighting equipment, electrical and electronic tools (with the exception of large-scale stationary industrial tools), toys, leisure and sports equipment, and automatic dispensers.*

WASTE ELECTRONIC AND ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT (WEEE)

The WEEE Directive sets out the financial and other responsibilities of electronic and electrical equipment producers with regard to the collection and recycling of waste. Since 2003, the EU has restricted the use of hazardous substances in **WEEE** and promoted the collection, recycling, and re-use of such equipment, because inadequately treated products pose health and environmental risks. The WEEE legislation established collection schemes where consumers must return their e-waste free of charge. It also requires dangerous heavy metals and flame retardants to be replaced with safer alternatives.

REGISTRATION, EVALUATION, AUTHORIZATION AND RESTRICTION OF CHEMICALS

The regulation for the Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals (REACH) became effective on June 1, 2007 to streamline and improve the former legislative framework on chemicals of the European Union (EU). REACH also creates the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) which has a central co-ordination and implementation role in the overall process. ECHA is located in Helsinki, Finland and will manage REACH processes to ensure consistency across the EU. REACH places greater responsibility on industry to manage the risks that chemicals may pose to health and the environment. In principle, REACH applies to household chemicals, too, and not just those used in industrial processes. The objectives of REACH are to:

- Reduce the risks posed by chemicals to humans and the environment
- Enhance the competitiveness of the EU chemicals industry, a key sector of the economy
- Promote alternative methods for the assessment of hazards of substances
- Ensure the free circulation of substances on the internal market of the EU

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PACKAGING AND LABELING STANDARDS

Private enterprise and government have a common interest in the purpose of labeling and the sustainability of packaging along with the marketing benefits of a creative, consumer-oriented container for delivering a product. Because of differences by country, it is essential to distinguish between voluntary and mandatory requirements for public safety and environmental concerns. While manufacturers and shippers want to protect their products and make the packages visually appealing, packaging and labeling is considered an onerous cost since it is discarded after use.

PACKAGING

Currently, standards vary by country and product on the packaging type, material, and durability. For sensitive items, such as food, medicine, cosmetics, or hazardous goods, there are stricter standards for their packaging and handling. Often, the seller may choose to have higher standards than required to avoid lawsuits or competitive issues. Available for a fee, packaging standards were developed based on the physical, mechanical, and chemical properties of the various pulp, paper, wood, and plastics used commercially.

RESTRICTIONS ON NON-MANUFACTURED WOOD PACKAGING MATERIALS (ISPM-15)

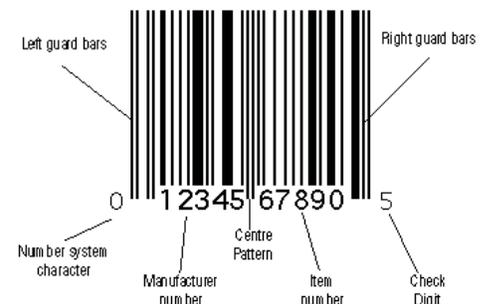
Many countries have enacted measures to avoid the infestation of the pine wood nematode, a pest that damages coniferous pines. Exporters using non-manufactured wood packing material such as pallets, crates, boxes, or dunnage in shipments need to certify that the coniferous wood materials have been heat-treated (kiln dried) or fumigated. To some extent, exporters can "self-certify" by providing a signed statement to the authorities (Customs/Agriculture) stating that their shipments contain only non-coniferous, hardwood packaging.

LABELING

As opposed to "marks", labels are in the form of written text or numerical statements, which may be required but are not necessarily universally recognized. Labels usually describe information about a product, such as measurements, or an indication of materials that may be found in the product. Mandatory labels usually indicate the contents, measurements (units, weight, volume), pricing, expiration date, and any warnings associated with the products' use. In many countries, labels must be in the host language, which results in translation costs for the producer. Often, manufacturers minimize costs by printing packages with multiple languages so the product can be sold in multiple markets. Heavy costs are associated with language translations of instructions, user manuals and computer software.

BAR CODES

The Universal Product Code (UPC) is a globally-recognized symbol that is used for automated identification, tracking and tracing of items. There are newer versions that hold more information, but have not reached the status of the UPC yet. Registering a unique UPC can be expensive because of the yearly fees associated with its use.



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VEDP SERVICES

The VEDP offers a number of export-related services to Virginia businesses, including group market visits and market research by our Global Network of in-country consultants. These services are available to all Virginia exporters. For more information, please visit our website: www.exportvirginia.org

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AND WORKS CITED

- American National Standards Institute (ANSI): www.ANSI.org
- ASTM International: www.ASTM.org
- Canadian Standards Association International: www.CSA-International.org
- China's CCC Mark: Guide: <http://www.mac.doc.gov/China/Docs/BusinessGuides/cccguid.htm>
- Conformity online standards magazine: <http://www.conformity.com>
- Directory of International Organizations and Standards Resources: <http://www.infogoal.com/>
- European Directives: <http://www.rohs-weee.eu/english/index.html>
European Chemicals Agency (ECHA on REACH): http://echa.europa.eu/home_en.asp
WEEE: http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/weee/index_en.htm
RoHS: <http://www.rohs.eu/english/index.html>
- GS1—Universal Product Code: http://www.gs1.org/barcodes/need_a_bar_code
- International Electro-technical Commission (IEC): <http://www.iec.ch>
- Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE): www.IEEE.org
- IEEE Standards Association: <http://standards.ieee.org/>
- International Standards Organization (ISO): <http://www.iso.org>
- Israel Standards Institution: http://www.sii.org.il/20-EN/SII_EN.aspx
- Japanese Standards Association: http://www.jsa.or.jp/default_english.asp
- Mexican Secretary of the Economy, list of NOMs: <http://www.economia-noms.gob.mx/>
- National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST): www.NIST.gov
- National Wood Pallet and Container Association-Fumigation: (703) 519-6104
<http://www.palletcentral.com/ExportTreatment/ExportTreatmentProg.asp>
- NSF International: <http://www.nsf.org/business/rohs/faq.asp>
- Rhein Tech Laboratories, Herndon, VA: <http://www.rheintech.com>
- SGS Group—Electrical and Electronics Testing: <http://www.ee.sgs.com>
- Technology International, Richmond, VA: <http://www.techintl.com/>
- USDA wood packaging requirements ISPM 15 by country: <http://www.aphis.usda.gov/>
- U.S. Department of Commerce:
CE Mark Specialist: (202) 482-4496 www.export.gov/cemark/eg_main_017274.asp
International Standards: http://www.export.gov/faq/eg_main_017513.asp
WEEE and RoHS regulations: <http://www.buyusa.gov/europeanunion/weee.html>
- U.S. Department of Labor, OSHA-Recognized Testing Laboratories: <http://www.osha.gov/>
- Wyle Labs-Testing Services: www.wylelabs.com/services/testandevaluationservices.html

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