



Why certify your products?

Would you get on a plane that hadn't undergone rigorous testing? Or drive a car that had never been crash tested? How about using a life jacket with no flotation guarantee?

If you answered 'yes' to any of these questions, it is likely you may have been putting your life at serious risk.

Product certification is a process that confirms a product meets the necessary local, national or international quality standards relevant to a particular market or product set. For manufacturers, having the correct product certification can be critical to ensuring ongoing commercial success and maintaining a competitive advantage.

Some certification schemes are mandatory and subject to legal enforcement. Testing and certification in this circumstance can help you avoid financial risk, prosecution, harm to your reputation and claims for compensation and damages.

One of the challenges for the ordinary consumer is determining whether a product complies with a mandatory Standard.

Compliance with certain Standards can be mandatory either through Commonwealth or State laws or regulations. Mandatory Standards, such as those relating to consumer safety products, are referenced in the Trade Practices Act, 1974.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) enforces Standards mandated by the Act by 'surveying the market, responding to complaints and acting promptly against offending manufacturers or distributors, and by working with various industries to 'foster a culture of compliance'.

Under the Act, distributors and retailers must ensure that the products they sell or distribute comply with the relevant legal requirements – or be exposed to product liability claims.

This is where product certification, or third party assessment, comes in. Product Certification involves an independent, qualified third party assessing a manufacturer's capability to constantly manufacture a product to a recognised standard, such as an Australian Standard.

The product certification process involves both assessing the manufacturer's production systems and facilities and selecting representative samples of finished product for testing by independent suitably accredited testing facilities.

Once certified, the manufacturer will be able to display the assessing body's certification trade mark on the products produced, offering objective verification of its compliance. To retain its "certified" status, the certification process requires regular auditing of the manufacturer's facilities and ongoing batch testing of products to ensure that the systems continue to be effective.



The benefits

For many organisations, certification is a vehicle to opening up new markets, or to differentiate between a product. Differentiation can be based on conformance to specific standards. Some of the benefits of product certification include:

Demonstration of due diligence to ensure that your products meet the relevant criteria for quality;

The ability to break into new markets and maximize the potential of existing markets with appropriate certification and compliant products;

You will enable your product to stand out from your competitors. For example, BSI's distinguished Benchmark product certification mark is proudly displayed by many organizations whose product has been certified to an Australian/New Zealand or International Standard and is a mark representing quality;

Most importantly, certification demonstrates to your current and prospective customers that your product has undergone a rigorous audit and testing process – providing them with peace of mind and confidence in your product.

What is a Certification Mark?

A Certification mark on a commercial product indicates the following:

The existence of a product certification agreement between the manufacturer of a product and an organisation with national accreditation for both testing and certification;

Evidence that the product conforms with a nationally accredited standard;

Assurance the accredited certification organization has ensured that the item that was successfully tested is identical to that which is being offered for sale;

Assurance that the successful test has resulted in a certification listing, which is considered public information, and sets out the tolerances and conditions of use for the certified product;

Assurance that the manufacturer is being regularly audited by the certification body;

On the certified product, the label itself is a type of trademark whereby the manufacturer uses the mark to indicate the eligibility of the product for use in accordance with the requirements of the relevant standard or code.



CERTIFIED PRODUCT



AUSTRALIAN STANDARD



JAS-ANZ



Which Certification Mark?

There are many certification marks available for different products, applications, programs and markets. Understanding exactly which certification mark, or for that matter, what certification criteria is relevant to a given product, can be a daunting proposition. In some cases the Certification Body's themselves allow vested interests to confuse the certification process and the requirements of certification, by promoting one mark over another.

"BSI recommends that companies considering certification conduct thorough research before embarking upon the certification journey. Choose your certification program and certification body carefully to ensure that your certification mark is credible and appropriate for your specific stakeholder requirements. Ensure that the certification body whose mark you are using is accredited by JAS-ANZ (Joint Accreditation Scheme of Australia and New Zealand), the government-appointed accreditation body for Australia and New Zealand responsible for providing accreditation of conformity assessment bodies (CABS) in the fields of certification and inspection," says Lorraine Orr, BSI's General Manager of Risk and Compliance.

For more information about mandatory consumer product safety and information Standards please visit the ACCC website: www.accc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/268595

For more information about BSI please call 1300 730 134 or visit www.bsigroup.com.au