

Five Risks of Stopping at a Test Report When Certification Is Required

A completed test report may show that a building product met the requirements of an applicable test method. If the product must also be certified, listed or labeled, however, additional requirements may still apply.

Depending on the certification program, those requirements can include technical review, factory assessment, authorization to use a certification mark, and periodic follow-up inspections. Manufacturers should consider five areas before assuming that a completed test report is the final step.

"Identifying certification requirements before testing begins helps manufacturers plan testing, prepare documentation, and reduce the chance of additional requirements being identified later."

1. Passing the Test May Not Satisfy the Project Requirement

A test report documents how a specific specimen or assembly performed when evaluated to an applicable test method. That can provide important evidence of performance, but it does not automatically mean the product satisfies every requirement that may apply to the project or intended market.

If a code, specification, jurisdiction or other requirement calls for a certified or listed product, the manufacturer may need to complete the applicable certification process in addition to testing. For Intertek certification programs, that process can involve certification review, factory assessment, and authorization to use the applicable certification mark.

The test report can provide important data for the certification process, but additional steps may still be required before the product is certified or listed.

2. Certification Can Include Factory Assessments and Follow-Up Inspections

A standalone test evaluates the specimen or assembly submitted for testing. Certification can also address the manufacturing locations responsible for producing the certified product.

For ETL certification, Intertek conducts an Initial Factory Assessment at each proposed manufacturing location. Depending on the certification program, production-line

testing may also be required. After certification, follow-up inspections support continued compliance with the requirements associated with the certification and use of the certification mark.

The Warnock Hersey (WH) certification program also includes periodic follow-up inspections of manufacturing sites for certified products. Those inspections are part of the certification program and are separate from the manufacturer's own production quality-control process.

3. Product Changes May Require Additional Review

A certified product may not remain exactly as it was when originally evaluated. Materials, components, suppliers, coatings, fasteners, dimensions or manufacturing processes may change during the life of a product.

Depending on the certification program and what has changed, Intertek may need to review whether the existing evaluation and certification still apply. Changes that affect the product's construction or performance may require updated documentation or additional evaluation.

4. A Passing Test Does Not Authorize a Certification Mark

Successfully testing a product does not automatically authorize use of the ETL Listed Mark, Warnock Hersey (WH) Mark or another Intertek certification mark.

For ETL certification, successful testing is followed by additional certification steps that can include review of the product information, a certification agreement and an Initial Factory Assessment. Once the applicable requirements are satisfied, Intertek can authorize use of the ETL Listed Mark and add the product to its online directory.

The certification mark indicates that the product has completed the applicable certification process and is subject to the requirements associated with maintaining that certification.

5. Late Certification Requirements Can Mean Additional Review

If certification is needed after testing is complete, Intertek may need to review the existing test data to determine whether it can be used for the applicable certification program.

That review can include the test method, laboratory accreditation, product configuration, traceability and supporting documentation. The certification process may also require factory assessment and other program-specific steps before authorization to use the applicable certification mark.

Existing test data does not automatically need to be repeated. Whether it can be used depends on the certification program, how the testing was conducted, and the information available to support the results.

Identifying the certification requirement before testing begins gives manufacturers more opportunity to account for those factors when selecting specimens, planning testing, and preparing documentation.

Know the Requirement Before Testing Begins

Before testing starts, manufacturers should confirm the applicable standards, project requirements, intended markets, and whether certification, listing, or labeling is required.

That information helps establish the appropriate testing and certification path from the beginning and reduces the chance that additional requirements will be identified after testing is complete.

Intertek provides testing, inspection, and certification services for building products, including the ETL Listed Mark and Warnock Hersey (WH) certification programs.

Click here to learn more about Building Products Certification Services.

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