

CE marking

– not long now

With the introduction of the CPR and mandatory CE marking fast approaching, Dr Geoff Edgell, Director and Principal Construction Consultant at Ceram, looks at the implications for the industry.



CE marking of construction products is a huge topic of conversation at the moment; after 1 July 2013, under the Construction Products Regulation (CPR), it will become mandatory for manufacturers to apply CE marking to any of their construction products covered by a harmonised European standard (hEN) or product-specific European Technical Assessment (ETA).

From the perspective of Ceram, a notified body, it is interesting to observe the varying levels of readiness and/or acceptance within the UK's construction products industry. Several market leaders are looking forward to being able to put the CE mark on

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their products, seeing this as a clear way to not only demonstrate their credibility in the marketplace but also to distinguish their products from those of competitors. These manufacturers have already commissioned independent testing; to them, being one of the first manufacturers to CE mark their products can only help them in their fight to stand out from the crowd.

Other manufacturers, however, have been more reluctant to start the CE marking process. Maybe their procrastination stems from the hope that an escape route may suddenly appear and independent testing will not prove necessary? They are perhaps thinking it is very unlikely that Trading Standards will have the resources to adequately police the situation. They may indeed be right. What these manufacturers fail to realise, however, is the benefits that can be gained from embracing CE marking, rather than avoiding it, such as those of credibility and competitive advantage as outlined above.

Let us also not forget that many retail and trade outlets will insist on carrying only products with a CE mark due to their insurance cover. Which manufacturer wants to find themselves not being stocked any longer, simply because they couldn't commit to having independent testing?

There are, of course, those who are panicking about the 1 July deadline. What seemed a distant deadline, 'some time in the future', will soon be upon us. Manufacturers have had plenty of time to get their houses in order, though. After all, for the majority of products, harmonised standards have been in place for several years. This has given manufacturers, importers and distributors ample time to produce Declarations of Conformity (DoC) under the Construction Products Directive (CPD), the predecessor to the CPR, which can transpose readily into Declarations of Performance

(DoP). The CE mark simply provides a transparency as to whether or not a company has this data in the required form. It may be, of course, that there will be a honeymoon period after 1 July, although will that discriminate against those manufacturers who are complying?

A lack of commitment to CE marking could, of course, come from a lack of understanding of exactly what is required to obtain a CE mark. This is certainly understandable as there are many standards with many different scopes; finding out which standard your product falls under and which level of assessment and verification of constancy of performance (AVCP) your product is at, and hence whether it needs to be independently tested by a notified body, is challenging to say the least.

What is perhaps more worrying is that, from our recent experience here at Ceram, we have found that many manufacturers are simply unaware of the new regulation. Is this down to a lack of communication to the industry itself? Like it or not, aware of it or not, CE marking is being introduced for construction products. Whether you are a manufacturer of cements, lintels, tiles or adhesives, you will have to have a CE mark on your product to indicate compliancy with the relevant EU legislation. Those manufacturers who choose to ignore the new regulation may not only find that their products are left on the shelf, but also that they are simply not stocked at all. ■