

Product Compliance FAQs

Get answers to your questions about product compliance for international export markets.



Product Compliance

Here at **ELMG** we get asked about compliance all the time. So we made a frequently asked questions page on our website. Take a look at www.elmgz.com/faq-compliance.html for more compliance FAQs.

Q: It is all just EMC isn't it?

A: No. Product compliance covers all types of products and requirements including safety, function, acceptable failure and recycling. The EU's EMC requirements were perhaps a big learning experience for most people and so they think of EMC when compliance is mentioned.

Q: Isn't this just a technical barrier to trade?

A: This is not a question that can be answered easily. Some people would say yes and others no. Generally the question is an irrelevant distraction to a product developer. Compliance requirements are there for a reason or a number of reasons and most national requirements reflect a country's history and industrial or safety focus. If you are truly interested in taking the "technical barrier to trade" political approach, then politicians and bureaucrats may possibly help taking a case to the World Trade Organisation.

Q: Which standard should we use?

A: This depends on where you are selling and what you are selling. There are a large number of standards in the world. Standards that we have seen used relatively often are:

- UL508 Industrial control equipment for the USA
- UL 60950 Telecommunications/IT equipment
- IEC 60950 Telecommunication/IT equipment
- IEC 60601 Medical Devices
- IEC 61010 Measurement and Lab equipment
- IEC 60335 Household equipment
- IEC 50178 Power Equipment
- IEC 61000 Generic EMC standards

ELMG Can help you in choosing and finding the correct standards.

Q: Where can my company buy standards?

A: Websites include British Standards, www.bsi.org.uk, the IEC, www.iec.ch, IHS Global, www.global.ihs.com and New Zealand Standards www.standards.co.nz. Your national standards associations or companies may also sell standards.

If you are not a subscriber to the **ELMG** e-mail newsletter become one and receive **ELMG** News four times a year. Complete the form at www.elmgz.com/newsletter.html

ELMG: Product compliance specialists

©2005 ELMG Ltd. Electronics Design & Development
PO Box 112, Lyttelton 8033, New Zealand

Phone +64 3 961 1222 | Fax +64 3 961 1222 | Email enquiries@elmgz.com | Web www.elmgz.com

ELMG: Product Compliance Specialists

Q: Why should we use ELMG to do product compliance when our test lab say they can do it all for us?

A: This is a good question. The key difference between a test lab's service and ELMG's offering is that the test lab will not typically be involved in the design of the product. ELMG's service is typically a design and advice input at the front end to ensure that the product will comply and meet the requirements when it is tested. The ELMG input gives confidence that the product will pass the tests the first time through.



Q: What is a declaration of conformity?

A: A declaration of conformity is a declaration that the product will comply with the tests from a given standard when installed as instructed. The declaration can then be used by the purchaser to apply the CE mark without performing tests for themselves. One situation where a declaration of conformity is useful is with a product that does not provide end user functionality. The CE mark should not be applied to such a product under the EMC directive but a declaration of conformity should be provided. (The non-application of the CE mark is generally rendered moot by the application of the CE mark under some other directive - typically the LVD).

As declarations of conformity are signed by individuals there is some debate from a personal liability point of view as to whether they should be supplied as a matter of course or only when requested. This, along with who should sign them, is best discussed with legal council, your marketing department and ELMG.

Q: Why do some markets require testing against standards and some do not?

A: Generally the requirements for product testing and/or certification have arisen because of events that have happened in the country(ies) and the way the legal system and economy work. Typically the higher value economies, like the US and Europe, are more heavily regulated and standardised with higher compliance requirements than lower value economies.

Q: What is the best advice for a company considering or moving toward getting product tested and marked for CE, UL or any other mark?

A: The most surprising thing about the process is that it creates a structural organisational change and power shift in the organisation. Typically design engineers feel threatened by it as they now must somehow obey new rules enforced by an external third party. Research and development managers are put under pressure to reduce the number of development cycles as each cycle requires re-testing. Executives will feel that some of the flexibility in the way the company operates is gone. In terms of advice for achieving good results:

1. Understand why your company needs to do this. This is typically a market requirement. Clarify this as much as possible.
2. Get some external help. There are HR reasons for this along with technical ones. Examples include external people being more effective in introducing new concepts and having some one to use as an authority figure.
3. Make a plan.
4. Assess where it has impacts in your business. Change control is a typical area but there are others also.
5. Get ready for people to react negatively and have an HR plan to deal with it.
6. Recognize what it will cost.
7. Get some external help and use them appropriately.

Q: Is there a way to simplify what the engineers need to know about the standards?

A: Yes. A good approach that we have seen work well is the "How we do it here" approach. The standard requirements are translated into requirements for your specific product range and codified in tables and internal reference documents. One situation where this is especially effective is where the requirements of multiple standards from two different places, typically the EU and the US, must be simultaneously designed into the product.

More FAQs at www.elmgz.com/faq.html

ELMG: Product compliance specialists

©2005 ELMG Ltd. Electronics Design & Development
PO Box 112, Lyttelton 8033, New Zealand

Phone +64 3 961 1222 | Fax +64 3 961 1222 | Email enquiries@elmgz.com | Web www.elmgz.com