

Why Certify?

Ensuring quality and integrity with product certification

By Tina Fischer

Numerous drinking water treatment products fill the shelves of stores each day and claim to remove impurities from water. Some even make outrageous claims of being able to improve health and insist that using the product will prolong life. A certified product, however, bears a distinguished mark (each certification agency has its own) indicating that the product has undergone evaluation and testing to verify that the product will perform as the certified claims indicate.

The standard to which the product was tested is clearly labeled to provide a means of comparing products tested according to the same procedures. This provides an apples-to-apples comparison versus apples to oranges when the test protocols vary.

A certified product also provides consumers proof that the product will work correctly and improve the quality of drinking water. Perhaps the most important reason to certify is because in order to fill shelves in retail locations, product certification is mandatory.

What Can be Certified?

All products that touch or treat water have the ability to be certified. Four of the main categories include:

- **Drinking Water Treatment Products.** Point-of-use (POU) and point-of-entry (POE) filters, water softeners, reverse osmosis systems, shower filters, pipes, faucets, pumps, chemical additives and commercial and industrial products.
- **Pool and Spa Equipment.** Ozone equipment, chemical feed pumps and pool filters.
- **Food Processing Equipment.** Products that come in contact with food or food zones.
- **Bottled Water.** Bottled water such as packaged and spring water.

Choosing Products to Certify

Choosing which products to certify is not a decision that should be taken lightly. Product certification does cost money, so it is imperative to choose wisely. The decision is often-times made based on the product line that is the most popular. Some manufacturers will also focus on having the newest product line undergo certification. This strategy is often exploited when newly developed products follow trends that consumers are made aware of through media hype.

If arsenic is a hot topic in the news, for example, manufacturers develop

a product that has the ability to reduce the levels of arsenic in water. Consequently, having a certified product for something consumers are looking for among all of the noncertified options provides an obvious advantage.

While all of these options appear to be adequate reasons to call your nearest certification agencies, it is imperative to evaluate your marketing and business needs prior to jumping into a certification decision.

Who is Reputable?

Industry standards are available to the public. Any individual or corporation can purchase an industry standard and follow the protocols within the standard to test and certify products without anyone or any agency overseeing their procedures. It is important when certification agencies are evaluated for product certification that they can confirm that their program is accredited by an outside agency.

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) in the U.S. and the Standards Council of Canada (SCC) for Canadian products are the two most widely recognized accreditation agencies at this time. These agencies ensure that the certifiers are following a specific set of guidelines and rules. If a certification agency is accredited by these two agencies, it will provide confidence that the certified products meet U.S. and Canadian regulations for import and sale throughout North America.

In addition to accreditations, it is important to discuss with each certifier their policies regarding the frequency of facility inspections as well as recertification and retesting. Audits, retesting frequency and certification activities are not governed by the standards; rather, they are detailed within each certification agency's set of policies. Therefore, these items, while still accredited by ANSI and SCC, may vary between each certifier. The differences can result in time and cost

savings in the long run for your certifications. Be prepared and ask questions to ensure that the certifier you are working with will not only meet your deadlines, but will not break your bank.

Is it Difficult?

Each type of product listed has its own set of rules to follow for certification. Drinking water treatment products, for example, will be required to undergo materials safety, structural integrity and performance testing. The chemical additives and drinking water treatment components (pipes, fittings, etc.) are only required to undergo the materials safety testing.

For all types of certifications, there is a step-by-step process that is similar between all certification agencies:

- Submit an application, product literature and product data sheets. The data sheets will detail the specifics of your products. Blank copies will be provided from the certification agency.
- The certification agency will perform technical and toxicological reviews, provide a proposal for the project and request the product for testing.
- Testing will be conducted.
- A literature review will be completed and a facility inspection performed.
- Once all of the above items have been completed in accordance with the testing standard and certification policies, certification will be granted and you may begin using the Certification Mark.

In the end, the detail involved with certification is relative to the type of product being certified. A more complex product such as a POU filter that can be tested to verify reduction for hundreds of different types of contaminants will take months to certify, while specific chemical additives could obtain initial certification within a few weeks. Product certification is important for ensuring consumer safety. No matter your needs, there is a certification agency and a certification that is right for you. *wqp*

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