

Safety Corner

What does the marking of “CE” on products stand for?

The symbol "CE" you find on safety products do not stand for any specific words but are the abbreviation of a French phrase “Conformité Européene,” which literally means “European Conformity”. The term initially used was “EC Mark” and it was officially replaced by “CE Marking” in 1993 representing a manufacturer's declaration that the equipment or the product complies with the essential requirements of relevant European Union (EU) health, safety and environmental protection legislation.

If a product falls under the scope of the approximately 20 so called 'New Approach' Directives, it must bear the “CE” symbol before the product can be placed in the market or put into service in the EU member states, and Norway, Iceland and Liechtenstein. On the other hand, once the “CE Marking” is affixed to a product, these countries may not prohibit, restrict or impede the trading of the product. Thus, CE Marking is often regarded as the trade passport for EU of products.

The “CE Marking” is not a quality-mark as it only indicates to governmental officials and customers that the product meets designated minimum safety standards. To permit the use of a CE symbol on a product, proof that the product meets the relevant health and safety requirements must be documented. This is achieved using an external testing or certification agency which evaluates the product and its documentation, or by a company-internal self-certification process. In any case the responsible organization (manufacturer, representative, importer) has to issue an EC-Declaration of Conformity (EC-DoC) indicating his identity (location, etc.), the list of European Directives he declares compliance with, a list of standards the product complies with, and a legally binding signature on behalf of the responsible organization. Parts of the certification process for the CE Marking could be performed by 3rd party test houses or certification bodies; in which case, the CE marking must also include a number that identifies the so called Notified Body.

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The Safety Corner is contributed by Ir Dr. Vincent Ho, who can be contacted at vsho.hkarms@gmail.com