

CertifiGroup

US Companies Risk Lawsuits When Preparing Products for Sale in Europe With CE Marking

“CE Marking” certification for Europe is a “Self-Declaration”, but what happens if it’s incorrect? Many company owners don’t realize the liability they assume when signing the CE documentation.

In North America, most electrical equipment manufacturers are required to have their products tested by an independent testing laboratory, such as UL, MET, CSA, ETL, and TUV. In the US, these laboratories are approved and audited by the Federal Government (OSHA) and are required to prove experience and competence for the accreditation. For the European Union, “CE Marking” “Self-Declaration is allowed.

What’s the difference? With an independent accredited testing laboratory there are some assurances. The correct Standard is chosen, the electrical construction evaluation performed by an Engineer is thorough, and the testing is performed by experienced technicians. With CE marking, none of this is assured. In fact, in the testing and product safety consulting business, products are submitted every day with the CE mark that have multiple problems and hazards.

One of the requirements for the CE Marking is that the owner or CEO of the company sign the Declaration of Conformity. This brings up several questions. Does this person understand the process? Do they have any technical knowledge? Would they know if something was wrong with the product or the test results? Would they even know if any testing had been done or if the proper equipment and procedures had been used? Would they know that a Technical Construction File is required, or that a EU authorized agent is required to hold the report?

Customs and port inspectors in Europe are looking for the CE Marking on all products. Additionally, if there are any questions for any reason, they can request the Technical Construction File. If the file is not with the agent, (or does not exist) the shipment can be delayed, held or turned back. If a CE marked product causes injury or death, the CEO or company owner is held directly responsible in international court – this can result in fines or even prison.

Of course, there are many companies that successfully complete these self-declarations and sell products in the EU without using an independent testing laboratory. Some have experienced people on staff, own the Standards and test equipment, know the Directives, and create an accurate technical file. Others are only placing the CE sticker on the product and are just “Rolling the dice”.

CertifiGroup provides some free-of-charge services to help US manufacturers. Call or e-mail to sent up an appointment at the testing facility in North Carolina. Call 800-321-4655 or go to the website www.certifigroup.com to send an e-mail or information request.

CertifiGroup also regularly provides US (UL) and Canadian (CSA) certifications for North America, SEMI S2 evaluations for semiconductor equipment, ingress protection testing, hazardous (Classified) location certification and field evaluations, generators, solar and wind turbine safety, medical and laboratory equipment.