

Resource Centre:
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Product Conformity Programme (PCP)

Comprehensive Procedures
and Guidelines

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Author's note

Authorized versions of this document are currently available in Arabic and English. Unofficial translations are not encouraged and sections of this document should not be distributed separately.

1. Introduction

Mandatory standards in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are applied equally to both imported and domestically produced products for the protection of health, safety, national security, public morals, the environment and prevention of deceptive practices. Procedures for assurance of conformity to the applicable Saudi standards are enforced by the Ministry of Commerce & Industry (MoCI) for imported products and by the Ministry of Industry, Ministry of Municipalities, Ministry of Agriculture and the MoCI for domestic products.

The MoCI, has implemented the Product Conformity Programme (PCP), as a combined conformity assessment, inspection and certification scheme on the basis of which consignments are allowed entry into the Kingdom, and cleared more quickly through Customs upon arrival.

Compliance with the relevant Saudi standards, or approved equivalent alternatives (e.g. international and, exceptionally, national standards) results in the issue of a Certificate of Conformity (CoC) prior to shipment. Details of Saudi and alternative standards are contained in PCP technical documents, available on request from Country Offices or Regional Licensing Centres.

The PCP provides assurance to the Saudi consumer that Regulated Products are free from potential safety hazards and are fit for use in Saudi Arabia. The manufacturer benefits from the demonstration that his products satisfy the requirements of Saudi Arabia. Exporters and importers benefit from the streamlined customs process, which allows goods to clear more quickly without risk of rejection.

The PCP applies to all consumer products exported to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A wide choice of Saudi approved and/or nationally or internationally accredited laboratories is available to carry out testing to Saudi requirements. This document provides detailed information of the steps needed to comply with the requirements of the Programme in order to obtain a shipment Certificate of Conformity. It also includes the requirements relating to the Registration and Type Approval Licensing processes.

2. Definition of Terms

Conformity Assessment*: Any activity concerned with determining directly or indirectly that relevant requirements are met.

Conformity Evaluation*: Systematic examination of the extent to which a product fulfils specific requirements.

Inspection*: Conformity evaluation by observation and judgement accompanied as appropriate by measurement, testing and gauging.

Inspection Body*: Body that performs Inspection.

Conformity Testing*: Conformity evaluation by means of testing.

Type Testing*: Conformity testing on the basis of one or more specimens of a product representative of the production.

Testing Laboratory*: Laboratory that performs tests.

Conformity Surveillance*: Conformity evaluation to determine the continuing conformity to specified requirements.

Verification of Conformity*: Confirmation, by examination of evidence, that a product fulfils specified requirements.

Supplier's Declaration*: Procedure by which a supplier gives written assurance that a product conforms to specified requirements.

Registration*: Procedure by which a body indicates relevant characteristics of a product in an appropriate, publicly available list.

Type Approval*: Permission for a product to be marketed or used for stated purposes or under stated conditions based on type testing.

Certification*: Procedure by which a third party gives written assurance that a product conforms to specified requirements.

Certification Body*: Body that conducts certification by operating its own testing and inspection activities or overseeing these activities carried out on its behalf by other bodies.

Certificate of Conformity*: Document issued under the rules of a certification system, providing confidence that a duly identified product is in conformity with a specific standard.

* Reference ISO/IEC Guide 2: 1996 Standardization and related activities – General Vocabulary

Product Conformity Programme (PCP): The Certification Scheme that has its own rules of procedure and management for carrying out Certification of Conformity on all consumer products exported to or manufactured in Saudi Arabia.

Regulated Products: Products currently required to be certified prior to supply under the PCP.

Approved Laboratory: A Testing Laboratory, which has been evaluated and approved based on its qualifications to carry out Type Testing and/or some level of Conformity Testing on selected Regulated Products. Eligibility for approval is open to:

- Laboratories accredited by nationally recognised laboratory accreditation bodies.
- Qualified laboratories nominated by various countries under their governments' full responsibility.
- Other qualified laboratories nominated by manufacturers.

Type Approval Licence: Document, issued under the PCP confirming Type Approval status for an identified product.

Regional Licensing Centre (RLC): The body that administers the Registration process, carry out Verification of Conformity, and issue Type Approval Licences.

Country Office (CO): The Body designated in a specified country or region to carry out Inspection, Verification of Conformity and Certification under the PCP.

Note 1: An Approved Laboratory that meets the Inspection qualification criteria can be classified as an Inspection Body.

Note 2: Inspection Bodies can be authorized, if qualified, to issue Certificates of Conformity.

3. Procedures for Product Compliance

The essential elements of the Programme are:

- Regulated Products must demonstrate compliance with Saudi Arabian technical regulations i.e., Saudi or other approved international standards;
- Each shipment of Regulated Products must be accompanied by an PCP Certificate of Conformity.

Methods of achieving these requirements vary, according to the nature of the product, and the current level of compliance met by existing product certifications. Exporters may choose the route most appropriate to their product range and frequency of exports. These options are described in detail below:

A. Compliance Verification: This option is considered appropriate for infrequent exporters or suppliers to market. It involves the presupply inspection and presupply testing of products in a consignment identified and prepared for supply to the Saudi Arabia market. Physical inspection of the goods is carried out to verify all requirements that may be visually determined. These include, but are not confined to, safety marking, language requirements, instruction manuals, labelling, packaging, storage, accompanying certificates etc. Presupply testing may involve the destructive, or non-destructive testing required to establish compliance to essential safety, environmental or other criteria specified by the Saudi Arabian technical regulations. Testing requirements may be satisfied by the presentation of test data produced by an accredited laboratory, witness testing, or by manufacturer's independently certified data.

B. Registration and Pre-supply Inspection:

This option involves a declaration and substantiation by the manufacturer or exporter that his products satisfy the essential Saudi Arabian requirements as a minimum. In most cases, these requirements relate to the aspects of Saudi standards that take account of Saudi Arabian specific climatic/geographical conditions, national security requirements and public moral standards.

Registration provides information to allow an assessment to be made of the current level of compliance to declared standards. The manufacturer or exporter is informed of the relevant standards and/or steps to be taken in order to satisfy essential Saudi requirements. These steps may involve product testing for compliance, and modification to products where deficiencies are noted.

Registration remains valid after the first year, subject to periodic review and assurance that no change in compliance status has occurred. This is established by data evaluation, or testing, where necessary. Consignments of registered products are subject to routine presupply inspection. The inspection process aims to verify full compliance of the registered product, including compliance with those elements of the Saudi standards, in addition to the essential requirements, necessary to attain full conformity. Minor deviations, such as some types of labelling requirements, may be allowed, recorded and monitored through the discrepancy reports resulting from the inspection activities. In such cases, Certificates of Conformity continue to be issued.

Exporters and local manufacturers are expected to raise progressively the level of compliance in subsequent shipments. Eventually, full compliance is enforced. In cases where a satisfactory level of compliance has not been demonstrated, limited pre-supply testing may be necessary in order to obtain a Certificate of Conformity.

Where registered products undergo subsequent technical or physical modification, it is necessary to verify continued compliance. In these cases, re-registration of the modified product models or types is required.

C. Type Approval Licensing:

To achieve Type Approval Licensing, products must demonstrate full compliance to Saudi Arabian requirements. Licensed products may be supplied with the minimum of intervention. Through the progressive Registration process, products which demonstrate full and continued compliance with Saudi standards qualify for Type Approval status and issuance of a Type Approval Licence. Manufacturers of unregistered products who choose to apply directly for Type Approval are required to submit their products for pre-assessment to establish their extent of compliance with Saudi standards. The requirements of Registration must be satisfied during this pre-assessment stage before progressing with Type Approval Licensing procedures.

In addition to full compliance, a major determining factor of compliance assurance maintenance is the evaluation and approval of the manufacturer's quality control system.

Licensing procedures closely follow ISO/IEC Guide 28 - General Rules for a Model Third Party Certification System for products.

Supplier's declaration of conformity, with respect to test reports, quality marks or certifications issued by approved internationally accredited Conformity and Type Testing laboratories, including third party certification and notified bodies, are accorded full recognition insofar as they satisfy the relevant elements of the Registration and Type Approval criteria. Type testing will normally be limited to those elements of the Saudi standards not satisfied by the existing certification. Unnecessary duplication is thereby avoided.

Full details of Licensing requirements, steps involved, and the fee structure, are contained in the Licence Application Pack, available on request from any RLC.

Application for Licensing:

A manufacturer must complete an Application for Licensing for each product or products for which a Licence is required. The following information is requested:

- i) Technical description of the products referenced in the application.
- ii) Identification of the Laboratory chosen for the Conformity and Type Testing from the list of Saudi Arabian Approved Laboratories, or nomination by the manufacturer of other laboratory for evaluation and approval.
- iii) Identification of any existing surveillance activities at the factory locations producing the Regulated Products to be covered by the Licence.

Conformity Testing, Type Evaluation and Approval:

Once the Regional Licensing Centre has received the required information, the manufacturer can contact the Approved Laboratory noted in the Licence Application to perform type evaluation. At the conclusion of the evaluation by the Approved Laboratory, a Conformity Test and Evaluation Report is issued by the Approved Laboratory.

The Conformity Test and Evaluation Report is then submitted to the Regional Licensing Centre for review and Verification of Conformity to Programme Requirements. If satisfactory results are received, Type Approval is confirmed.

Licence Issuance Requirements:

Following Type Approval, the Licence Surveillance Process commences. The Type Approval Licence can only be issued if the factories that produce the Type Approved Product are successfully audited.

- Initial Factory Inspection Licensing: involves initial factory inspection of all applicable manufacturing sites of the product to be Licensed. In cases where the applicant is not the manufacturer of the product to be Type Approved, co- operation of the manufacturer must be obtained.
 - Surveillance: ISO Guide 28 requires that a Certifying Body must exercise surveillance of its Licensed products to ensure continued compliance to the standard(s). Under the provisions of Licensing this surveillance is comprised of periodic re-inspection of the factory and limited retest of the product(s), to selected provisions of the Programme requirements, to ensure continued compliance. Occasionally, samples will be selected from shipments and from manufacturing locations to allow for testing and continued evaluation. Process related products, where natural variability of the raw materials necessitates closer monitoring and control for quality assurance purposes, are subject to more frequent surveillance, sample selection and testing. Examples of these are; cigarettes, jewellery, cement, perfumes and cosmetics.
- Surveillance responsibilities of the Regional Licensing Centre:
- i) Co-ordinate the surveillance activities at each manufacturing location.
 - ii) Require the submission of inspection documents (Audit Reports) on a periodic basis, in order to review compliance to Programme guidelines.
 - iii) Administer the periodic sample selection and testing of Licensed Products. Upon completion of the above mentioned evaluation and inspection activities, payment of Licensing fees, and execution of the Licence Agreement, the manufacturer is awarded a Type Approval Licence.

CoC for Licensed Products:

Presupply inspection is normally not required for each consignment of Type Approved Products. A manufacturer may obtain a Certificate of Conformity for Licensed products on submission of full shipment details and a valid Type Approval Licence to the CO. Under certain circumstances, a manufacturer holding the appropriate Type Approval Licence may choose to issue his own CoC provided that the approved stationery is used and recognised procedures are followed. If this option is chosen, copies of all shipping documents, the Type Approval Licence, and the draft CoC for each consignment must be provided to the CO at the earliest opportunity. This is to facilitate monitoring and intervention by the CO in the event of discrepancies or violations. If all documentation is satisfactory, a CoC Identification Number is provided by the CO. This number must appear on all Certificates for validation.

Type Approved products shipped by independent exporters will require Certificates of Conformity to be issued by the manufacturer or CO and will be subject to limited random presupply inspection in order to verify the integrity and composition of shipments.

Notwithstanding Type Approval status, occasional presupply inspections may also be necessary for some products in order to satisfy the assurance of conformity criteria.

Routes 1, 2 and 3 are shown in the flow diagram on the following page (Fig. 1). They are also shown in more detail in separate diagrams (Figs. 2, 3 and 4).

Section 4 of this Guidelines document outlines the individual steps involved in each of these options.

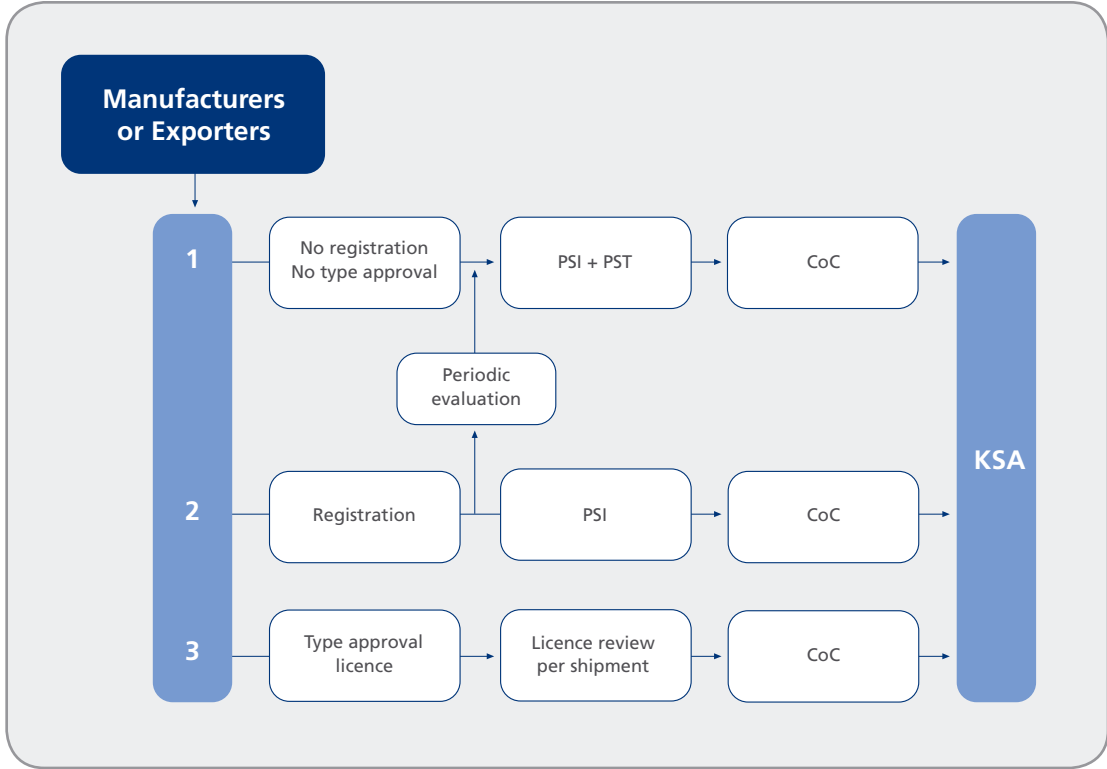


Fig.1 Compliance Verification Options

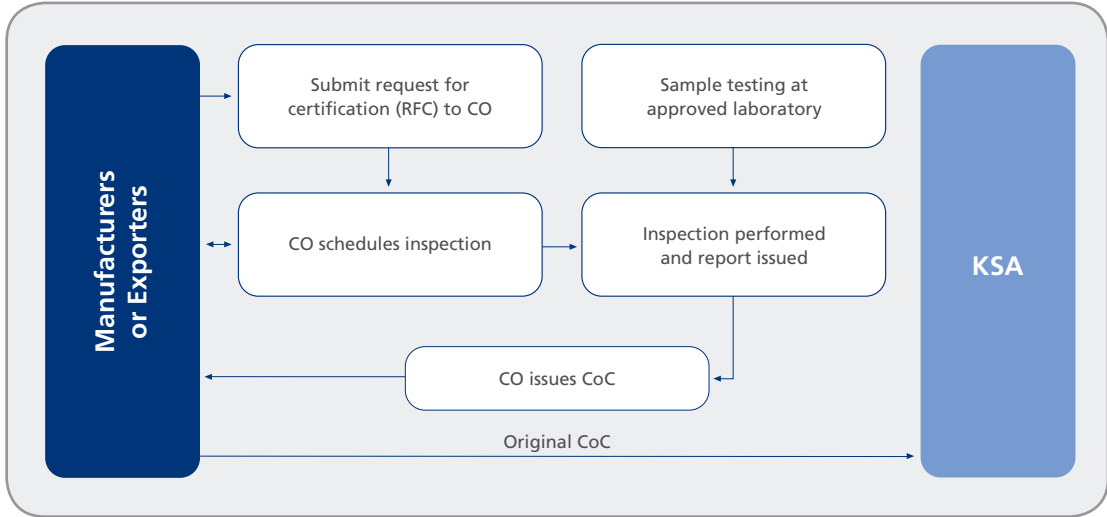


Fig.2 Route1. Pre-supply Verification

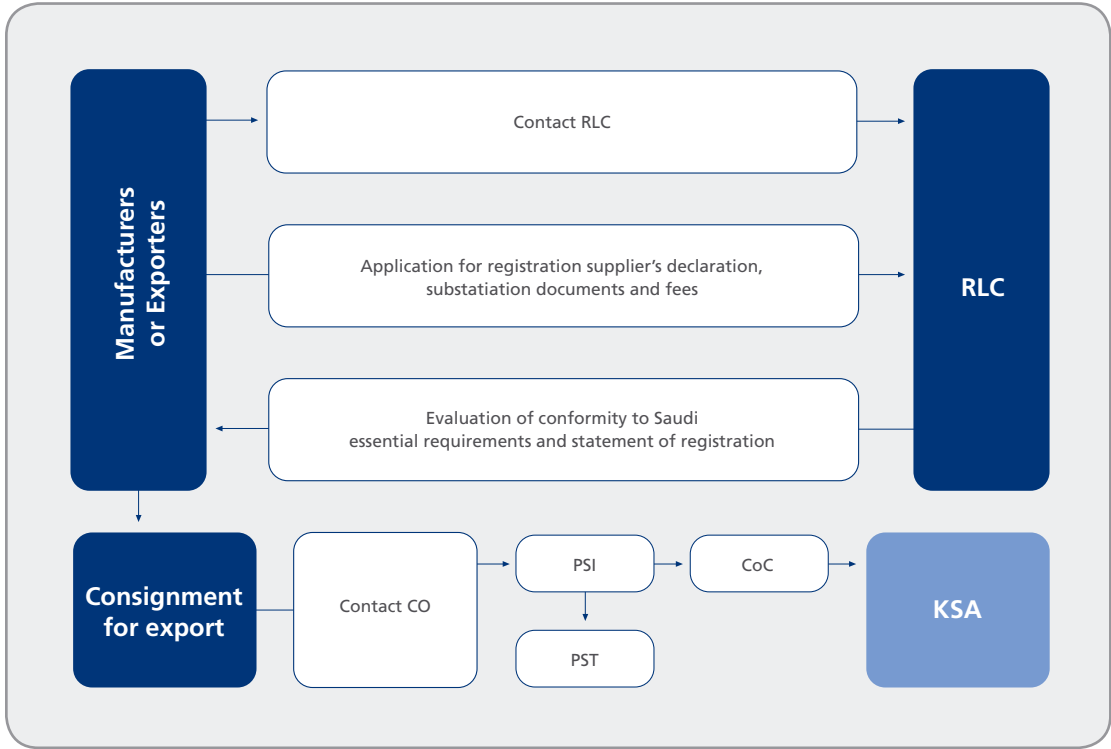


Fig.3 Route 2. Registration and Pre-supply Inspection

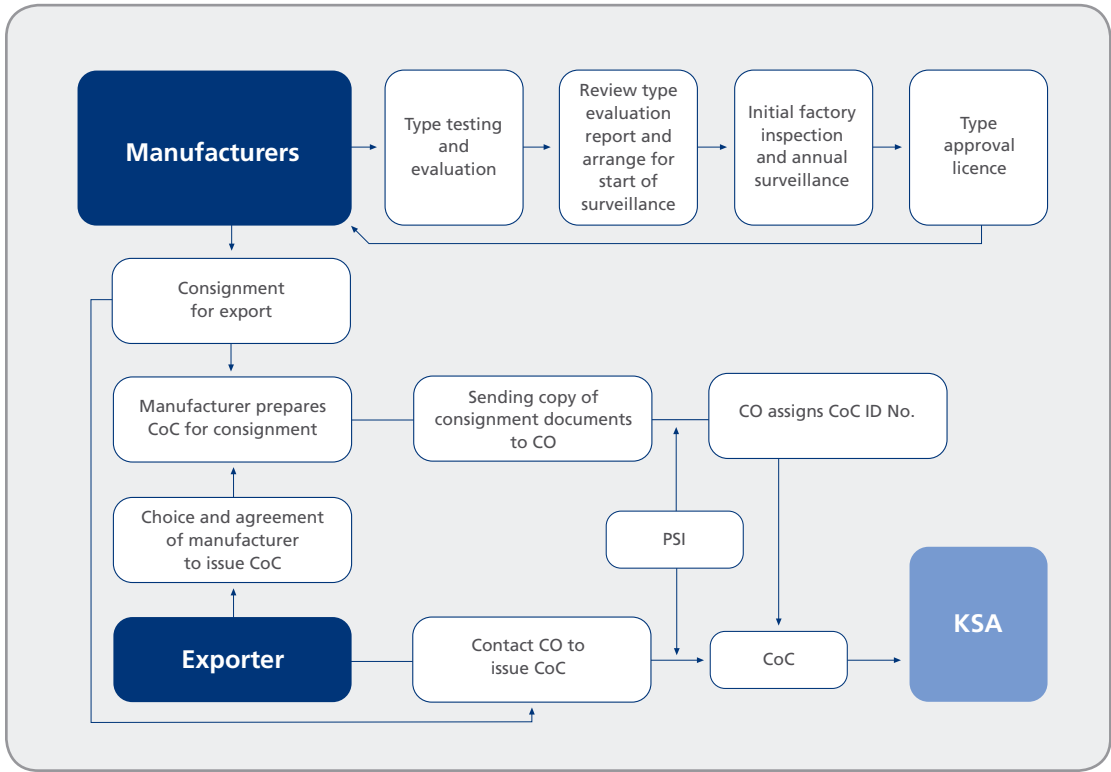


Fig 4. Route 3. Type Approval and Licensing

4. Shipment Certification Procedures

The following steps are involved in obtaining a Certificate of Conformity under each of the conditions described in the previous Section:-

Route 1. Presupply Compliance Verification No Registration or Type Approval

- i) Exporter contacts appropriate Country Office (CO) and provides requested product shipment details using Request for Certification form (RFC)
- ii) Exporter advised of requirements and, if possible, arranges for provision of test data
- iii) CO arranges laboratory testing, (if required) and pre supply inspection
- iv) Test data submitted to CO or testing carried out. Test certificate submitted to CO
- v) Pre supply inspection carried out and report submitted to CO
- vi) CO reviews test and inspection reports and, if satisfactory, issues CoC.

Route 2. Registration and Pre-supply Inspection - No Type Approval

- i) Following Registration, exporter contacts CO and provides shipment details using RFC form, together with copy of Statement of Registration
- ii) CO verifies Registration and proceeds to arrange inspection. In some cases, additional testing or provision of test data may be requested
- iii) Pre supply inspection carried out and report submitted to CO
- iv) CO reviews (or arranges review of) test data (if required) and inspection report and, if satisfactory, issues Certificate of Conformity.

Route 3. - Type Approval Manufacturer

- i) For a manufacturer who is also the exporter, following Type Approval and receipt of Type Approval Licence, manufacturer produces CoC (or requests CO to issue CoC), submits shipment details together with copy of Type Approval Licence (and CoC) to CO.
- ii) CO verifies Type Approval Licence details against shipment documentation:
 - If satisfactory, CO assigns and notifies CoC Identification Number (or issues CoC) and manufacturer proceeds with shipment.
 - If discrepancies or violations are found, CO withholds CoC, and notifies the manufacturer. An expedient investigation is carried out and appropriate action taken on the basis of the findings. Depending on the severity, frequency, and cause of the discrepancy, appropriate action may include suspension or withdrawal of the Type Approval Licence.

Exporters/Suppliers to Market

- i) For exporters/suppliers to market who are not the manufacturer, exporter/supplier submits shipment details to manufacturer, or submits copy of Type Approval Licence supplied by the Manufacturer, together with shipping details, to CO
- ii) CO verifies Type Approval Licence details against shipment documentation:
 - If satisfactory, CO assigns CoC Identification Number, manufacturer or CO issues CoC, and exporter proceeds with shipment.
 - If discrepancies or violations are found, CO withholds CoC and notifies other parties involved.
 - An expedient investigation is carried out and appropriate action taken on the basis of the findings. Depending on the severity, frequency, and cause of the discrepancy, appropriate action may include suspension or withdrawal of the Type Approval Licence.
- iii) CO arranges for limited random preshipment inspection.

5. Additional Guidelines

It is essential that importers assist in making their exporters aware of the above requirements and options. It is strongly recommended that the presentation of a Certificate of Conformity be made a requirement of the condition of sale and be included in Letters of Credit (L/C).

Requests for Certification must be submitted far enough in advance to ensure that the Certificate of Conformity is issued prior to the intended shipment date.

Typical operational turnaround times are as follows:-

- a. Pre supply inspection is normally conducted on a mutually agreed date scheduled within five working days from the date of notification by the manufacturer or exporter that a consignment is ready for shipment. Following the receipt of the final documents and successful completion of the pre supply inspection, a Certificate of Conformity is normally issued within 5 working days.
- b. Registration is normally completed within five working days.
- c. For Type Approved products, a Certificate of Conformity is issued within three working days.

If a consignment fails to meet the requirements, the exporter will be given full details of the deficiency and an opportunity to take corrective action. Where corrective action is not taken, a Statement of Non-Conformity is issued.

Upon arrival of the shipment at the Saudi Arabian port of entry, or before locally manufactured product is supplied to the market the accompanying Certificate of Conformity is checked for authenticity and shipment details before final release.

Compliance verification performed under the mandate of this Programme does not relieve the exporter or manufacturer of his obligations to the importer or distributor under the terms of the contract of sale.

One of the legitimate objectives of the Programme is to prevent deceptive practices. This includes, but is not confined to, fraudulent attempts to export or market counterfeit goods or goods deliberately "passed off" under well known or branded names.

Where these practices are evident, the Certificate of Conformity will be refused, and the information will be passed to the relevant authorities in Saudi Arabia and/or the country of export.

6. Regulated Products - Scope

All consumer products shipped to the KSA are considered regulated products. Further clarification of products covered under this Programme may be obtained from the Country Offices or Regional Licensing Centres.

Examples of Regulated Products that may be exempt from the PCP procedures are:

Regulated Products imported or placed on the market for use as samples or for demonstration purposes, and not for resale in the local market; Regulated Products imported as components of large industrial projects; and Regulated Products imported into Saudi Arabia on a temporary basis.

If an exporter is not certain whether or not products being exported or supplied to the Saudi Arabia market are covered by the PCP, Offices may be contacted for clarification. An official Regulated or Non-Regulated letter will be issued from the Central Coordinating headquarters in Riyadh. Unless otherwise advised, the Non-Regulated letter is valid for a period of twelve months from the date of issue.

7. Points of Contact

Country Office

The Country Offices have the responsibility to arrange and conduct presupply compliance verification procedures and issue Certificates of Conformity within their nominated countries of export or supply. If a Country Office (CO) is not available in a country, inspection/testing can be arranged by contacting the CO in the nominated country that will have at its disposal, a network of inspection agencies and approved laboratories located in the country of the exporter.

The CO acts as the central contact, information and processing point within its region between manufacturers or exporters, approved Testing Laboratories and Regional Licensing Centres. The CO is responsible for the receipt, dissemination and clarification of Programme requirements, and the distribution of other updated relevant information.

To ensure the CO's competence, integrity and uniformity of procedures, CO staff are continuously evaluated and receive extensive training on all technical and administrative activities involved in the inspection and certification processes.

Under the supervision of Central Coordinating Office, consistency of performance of the COs is assured. The location of COs is continuously reviewed, and additional COs are established according to geographic and operational considerations.

Questions relating to the contents of this document should be directed, in the first instance, to one of the Country Offices (CO), identified in Appendix A.

Regional Licensing Centres

The Regional Licensing Centres (RLCs) are responsible for the review and evaluation of suppliers' declarations, test data and existing certificates, in order to process and issue the Statements for Registration and Type Approval Licences. The RLCs provide information to new Registrants on all requirements of conformity assessment, such as updates to standards, compliance requirements, Saudi national deviations, and details on equivalency of international standards.

The RLCs work closely with the Registrants to assist them in achieving and maintaining satisfactory levels of compliance. These services continue to be provided through the annual programme subscription.

Five Regional Licensing Centres are located in strategic regions of the world as shown in Appendix B. The staff of each RLC are committed to provide timely service and consultation. The activities and practices of each Centre are co-ordinated by the Central Coordinating Office. This ensures consistent delivery of Programme requirements and guidelines. Contact details for the Regional Licensing Centres are given in Appendix B.

Approved Laboratories

To support the inspection and testing activities of the Programme, a large network of independent laboratories has been established. These laboratories provide the analytical services and test data required to confirm adherence to Saudi requirements and include commercial, government, university and manufacturer facilities. The exporter is free to contact any of these approved laboratories directly or he may nominate his CO to act on his behalf.

Some of the approved laboratories have specialist capabilities and have been additionally approved for Type Approval purposes. These laboratories provide conformity testing and type testing services and must hold appropriate accreditations, recognised by Central Coordinating Offices.

Central Coordinating Office Details

Intertek International Ltd.

Government Services

P. O. Box 250878

Riyadh 11391 Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Tel: +966 1 412 7751

Fax: +966 1 412 7716

E-mail: info.export2saudi@intertek.com



8. Confidentiality

All information (written and oral) concerning the business affairs of an exporter or manufacturer which is made available during execution of this Programme will be kept confidential by Central Coordinating Office and any of its agents.

All such information obtained will be used solely in connection with the implementation and maintenance of the Programme requirements.

9. Fees

Fees applicable to the International Conformity Certification Programme are paid by the party requesting certification, or other Programme related services, to the appropriate body issuing the CoC or performing conformity assessment and verification functions. These fees cover the cost of inspection, evaluation, testing, and all other technical and administrative activities involved in the shipment certification, Registration, Type Approval and Licensing processes. No part of these fees is allocated to any Saudi Government Agency.

1. Registration and Type Approval

Fees associated with product Registration and Type Approval are payable by the party submitting the application.

2. Shipment Certification

Pre supply inspection fees are calculated as a percentage based on the FOB value of the shipment. This percentage decreases as the FOB value increases. Additional testing or data evaluation fees may be applicable. Unless otherwise agreed in advance, fees are payable prior to the release of the Certificate of Conformity.