

Certification Documents

It's a Strange World

In the heyday of the nation's nuclear power industry, a frequent joke in the wire & cable industry was that the Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) apparently wanted the documentation for nuclear cables to weigh as much as the cable itself! This humor was probably a way of coping with the unpleasant task of assembling a mountain of paperwork.

Today, while not quite as critical as it was in the days of the nuclear industry, documentation is still very important for some users. Wire and cable customers that often demand specific documentation include military and original equipment manufacturers (OEMs).

Certification documents are usually categorized into two basic types—Certificates of Compliance (CofCs) and Certified Test Reports (CTRs).

Certificates of Compliance



A “C of C” is usually a one-page document that certifies in writing that a particular product (in our case wire & cable) meets certain specifications. For products sold to military and government markets, the C of C is usually a signed document that states that the product being shipped complies fully with a particular cable specification—typically a milspec document such as MIL-C-24643. For OEM markets, the C of C often certifies compliance with the customer's own specification or an industry wire and cable standard such as those published by UL or CSA.

Depending on customer requirements, C of Cs must often reference specific part numbers, specification documents and/or purchase order numbers. It is typical for a C of C to state that test reports are on file to support the claims made in the C of C. Certificates of Compliance constitute a legal agreement (contract) with the customer. As such, the person signing must be certain that the claims made in the C of C are, in fact, true. When the manufacturer of a product issues a C of C their Quality Manager typically signs it.

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If a customer requires a C of C from Anixter rather than from the manufacturer, we have several standard formats available. One is designed for mil spec customers, one for OEM customers and one for most other customers. C of Cs issued by Anixter are supplied by the shipping location and are usually signed by the Operations Manager or his/her designated quality representative.

Certified Test Reports



A “CTR” on the other hand, is usually a multipage document that contains actual test data. It usually details the tests conducted, the test methods used and the results of the tests obtained on a specific length (or lengths) of wire or cable. CTRs usually carry the signature of the technician(s) who made the measurements as well as the Quality Manager. They can be as long as a hundred pages or more for complex products but are typically less than twenty pages in length for most wire & cable products.

Anixter’s purchasing group routinely requests CTRs from the suppliers of our 5 through 35kV medium voltage cables at the time we place an order. The CTRs received are kept on file at either our corporate or the stocking location. As a result, we are normally able to supply basic CTRs for medium voltage cables shipped from our stock. However, because of the logistics involved and limited demand for CTRs, Anixter does *not* routinely request them for other products.

The Moral of the Story

If “certs”, as they are often affectionately called, are required with an order, they should be discussed with the customer early in the sales cycle. The type of cert needed (C of C or CTR) should be determined, along with the preferred issuer (Anixter or the manufacturer) and the level of detail expected. If a manufacturer’s certification is acceptable, the salesperson should request the certification from the product’s manufacturer. If a certification from Anixter is required, the type of cert needed must be communicated to the shipping location.

Manufacturers are generally not able to provide certs *after* a cable has been shipped. This is usually due to the loss of traceability, i.e., the loss of the paperwork trail back to the original test results. If certs are requested after the cable has been shipped, the situation is analogous to “closing the barn door after the horse has run away”. There is also sometimes an extra charge for the work involved in retrieval and preparation of the report.

Now that you know that certs are not just a breath mint, how does it feel to be a certified cert expert?