



Dangerous Goods Packaging

UN Testing and Approval

The UN System

The United Nations have established a universal system for the classification, packaging, marking and labelling of dangerous goods to facilitate their safe transport. National and international regulations governing road, rail, sea and air transport are all based on the UN system. Under the regulations, packaging must meet or exceed minimum standards of performance before it can be authorised for the carriage of dangerous goods. Package performance is established by subjecting specimens of the packaging to the tests described in Chapter 6.1 of the UN Model Regulations. If they pass the tests, packaging's subsequently manufactured to the same specification, (known as a design-type) may be regarded as meeting the requirements and marked accordingly.

The competent authority of an approving country, usually the country in which the tests have been performed, can allocate a unique UN approval mark to each successfully tested packaging design-type and this may be applied to every serially produced packaging that conforms to the design-type specification.

In the UK, the competent authority is the Secretary of State for Transport. The VCA Dangerous Goods Office (DGO) operates the UN package certification scheme in accordance with the Arrangements for Performance Testing, Certification and Marking of Packaging's for Dangerous Goods, on behalf of the Secretary of State.

Testing

Tests leading to the issue of a UN performance certificate and official GB mark may only be carried out by authorised test stations.

These are bodies that are accredited specifically for the purpose of UN package testing by the United Kingdom Accreditation Service (UKAS) in accordance with ISO 17025 and the UK Operational Instructions. Accreditation ensures that the test facilities, expertise, reporting and all matters affecting the quality of testing meet the standards required. Some authorised test stations operate commercially, accepting test work from all clients; the remainder are associated with packaging manufacturers or suppliers and will only test packaging they have produced themselves, or as a service to their customers. All of the test stations are independent of VCA and the Dangerous Goods Office itself does not test packaging.

Certification

For each package that has been successfully tested to the UN requirements, a test station may apply to the DGO for a design type approval certificate and GB mark. They may do this for themselves or on behalf of a client. The application will be accompanied by copy of the test report, which will be checked for technical accuracy and content. Periodically, DGO will also wish to see specimens of the tested packaging for quality assurance purposes. When all is satisfactory, a package performance certificate will be issued.

GB Certificates are subject to an annual renewal fee, payable by the certificate holder. Annual fees are invoiced in October each year and any certificate(s) for which a fee remains unpaid at 1 January the following year will be suspended. The UN marking allocated by virtue of a certificate is not authorised for use on any packaging which has been produced after the date of suspension. The details of all GB packaging approvals, together with their current status are published elsewhere on this website so that potential users can check the validity of any GB marked package they may be offered.

The specification of each packaging design type which has been allocated a GB UN mark must be revalidated every 5 years for quality assurance purposes.

Certificates and test reports are public documents, except for those issued to the MOD.

This article has been downloaded from the VCA Website where you can find further information on dangerous goods transportation and UN certified packaging - www.dft.gov.uk.



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