

'On-site Certification' A New Approach to Rapid Compliance



Sira Certification Engineer, Peter Walsh, looks at the idea of on-site certification and describes how it can help companies reduce lead times to market and product cost-effective product for use in hazardous areas.

For many manufacturers of Ex equipment, the pressure is on to deliver a product that is both cost-effective and superior to their competition, with the aim being to gain a firm foothold in their given market.

More often than not, the way this happens is when companies spot an opportunity and get a product to market quickly, before the competition, establishing themselves as a proactive and innovative organisation.

However, the fact of that matter is, certification is inherently not geared up for a rapid turnaround that the market dictates. There is often substantial (and time-consuming) testing and assessment required from a Notified Body to ensure that the product is indeed safe and designed for the hazardous area in which it will operate.

Nevertheless, the need from the customer remains. That is why, over many certification projects Sira has developed an 'On-site Certification' process with clients to minimise 'time to market'.

Put simply, this is a dedicated period of time when interaction between the Certification Engineer and the client takes place face-to-face at the certification body's facility or client's site. This allows an intensive and responsive review of issues, whilst progressing the overall assessment. The aim being to progress the approval in such a way that it drastically reduces the overall project duration.

Before we explain the advantages of this however, it is worth pointing out that not every company will suit this approach. Generally, EEx ia equipment lends itself to this way of working, as the onus is more

on the assessment of the product, rather than a stringent testing scope. Having said that however, dependant upon the aim of the session, it can work for any type of explosion protection.

The Way Sira carries out On-site Certification

On-site Certification normally takes the format of a period of time (i.e. a week) of in-depth discussions and assessments, carried out by a Certification Engineer in the presence of the client. This typically takes place at the client's premises, where they have full access to the resources required to make changes to progress the project.

The Certification Engineer would work with the client to progress the project, conducting assessments with the help of the client's expert knowledge of his product. This close interaction means any questions that arise as a result of the assessments can be answered instantly.

In fact the big advantage of the exercise is that the certification engineer is with the client the entire time of the on-site project. This results in a 100% efficient communication process, with no delays in exchanging information or getting answers to questions which would normally hold up the certification process.

The result is that the project duration is greatly reduced, thereby cutting assessment time dramatically, and resulting in the issue of a product certificate in a shorter lead-time.



Key Requirements & Considerations of the Process

Identify an Aim

It is important to identify an aim of the on-site session before it commences. A clearly set goal has to be established (for example, one company we worked with had an aim to complete certain assessments for the assessment report, so that they could then set up their manufacturing process whilst the final touches were put to the certification project). This was a clearly established aim and enabled us to structure the session in such a way as to meet that goal.

Be Flexible

It is also important to be flexible, as in practice, project requirements can change. Non-compliances may be found which require further work, so its important to have a period of time set aside to compensate for any unforeseen problems.

Dedicate a Resource

The client's design approvals team has to be on-hand and fully committed to the session. In this way all available time is used effectively, without any 'dead-time'.

Know your Limitations

The client has to be realistic. If they are new to the certification process, have a limited resource or cannot dedicate 100% of the time to the session, then clearly it will not be as effective as it should be. It is therefore important that the client understands his or her own limitations, which in turn enables us to structure a session to compensate for this.

The Effort of the Notified Body

For our part, we allocate a Certification Engineer who is dedicated to the project, and have a resource that supports him, meaning we can offer a fast and efficient service to the client.

Cost vs. Sales Potential

It is important to recognise the cost (both monetary and physically) in carrying out such a project. Additional costs may occur with an engineer being on-site, but the time saved by doing this means there is more time for the product to be placed on the market, maximising sales potential.

It is therefore important to weigh up the initial 'cost vs. sales' potential of being first in the marketplace.

Final Thoughts

In our experience, those with the ability to devote a team of engineers to an on-site product certification project are benefiting from the advantages of having a continued period of exposure to a Certification Engineer. The advantages include assessments conducted in a dramatically reduced time, and problems uncovered during the session are resolved quickly, without the need for delays in communication.

On-site Certification is an effective and proactive way to enable a manufacturer to deliver to the market a compliant product in the shortest possible lead-time, ensuring they maximise their growth potential in competitive markets.

For more information about how on-site certification can benefit your organisation, please contact Sira:

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