



Double-glazing companies often receive a bad press. But as

Bill Keating argues, tighter enforcement of European regulations within the field of glass construction could help weed out the rogues giving the industry a bad name



Glazing over

A MANDATE issued under the EU Construction Products Directive (89/106/EEC) has led to the writing of a range of European Standards that will effectively cover all components used in construction.

Under the umbrella grouping of 'Glass in Building', the standards are numerous and cover a broad spectrum from 'basic' flat glass through safety glasses through to the use of glass in the manufacture of insulating glass (double-glazing) units.

Although some of these will apply to a relatively small number of manufacturers, others such as EN1279 and EN12150 might be relevant to thousands of manufacturers. This article focuses on those relating to insulating glass sealed units complying to EN1279.

Having achieved compliance with the relevant European Standard, manufacturers may then choose to CE-mark their products. Although there's no mandatory requirement for UK based manufacturers to CE-mark their products if they

are being sold exclusively within the UK, this is not the case if they are to be sold abroad.

My company, technical consultancy CENSolutions Ltd – an active member of The Glass and Glazing Federation – has now raised concerns over the 'policing' of 'Glass in Building' European Standards within the double-glazing and fenestration industries. Manufacturers operating in these industries had been led to believe trading standards services would always act in response to written complaints concerning non-compliance with relevant standards, although in an ideal world it had been hoped there would be a more proactive approach. The reality seems to be that trading standards professionals have been somewhat

reluctant to investigate complaints due mainly to a lack of suitable information. Manufacturers through to sole traders have invested money, time and effort in achieving compliance with relevant standards. The costs are especially significant for smaller manufacturers and they are now rightly upset at losing business to other companies who have made no effort to comply. There is also concern at the importing of non-compliant products from outside the European Union especially where there are safety considerations.

With regards to toughened glass, there are still companies not compliant with EN12150.

Given the safety implications associated with installation of non-compliant and perhaps inadequately toughened glass, this should be a priority. While the published standards are complex, a basic checklist can be effective when separating out those companies who have made efforts to be compliant from those who have not. This gives a quick insight into compliance without the need for detailed fenestration industry knowledge.

Where manufacturers of sealed insulating

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reluctant to investigate complaints due mainly to a lack of suitable information.

The double-glazing industry in the UK has generally taken the implementation of European Standards very seriously. Over the years, the double-glazing industry has received, and continues to receive, bad press due mainly to malpractice by a relatively small number of companies. It had been hoped the properly-policed adoption of European Standards would help 'clean up' the industry, since for every reported rogue trader there are numerous companies providing an excellent product.

Companies from large multi-site

glass units are found to be non-compliant, they would be liable on summary conviction to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months or to a fine not exceeding level five on the standard scale or to both. Some companies have been compliant for approaching five years yet some months after the final deadline for compliance there are manufacturers who have done nothing.

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A view of a typical sealed insulating glass unit.