

Press Release

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C rating squeeze on small manufacturers, BM TRADA warns

BM TRADA Certification Ltd is concerned for smaller manufacturers, if the proposed introduction of a minimum 'C' energy rating for windows is included in the 2010 revision of Part L.

Product Certification Manager Simon Beer said, 'Within current UK window designs, to achieve a C rating as standard, gas filled IGUs are likely to be required, with a warm edge or stainless steel spacer bar.

However, these units have to be successfully tested to EN 1279 *Glass in buildings – insulating glass units* Part 3 and only a small proportion of manufacturers are taking the test, with a relatively high failure rate.'

The main reason, he stressed, 'is that this is, undeniably, a difficult test, so manufacturers have been nervous of undertaking it. The fact that some manufacturers are lobbying for changes to the test, to increase the pass rate, could also be putting people off. Equally, resources can be major issue for smaller companies who simply don't have gas filling capability.'

In order to switch to warm edge spacer bars from the more commonly used aluminium spacer, an IGU manufacturer would have to repeat the EN 1279-2 test, assuming this has already been done for air filled units, and obtain evidence to EN 1279-3 for gas filled units. 'Again, the smaller IGU manufacturers might find it hard to cope with such a significant further investment over such a short timeframe. However, if they don't, they might be forced to cease trading and in the current climate of rationalisation that is a real possibility.'



Another concern is that CE marking is opening up window and door markets to overseas competition. 'Tough though it seems, if UK manufacturers and fabricators don't make this investment, they will lose out to Europe. In our experience, these overseas manufacturers not only have a window that would breeze through the C rating, but they also have the financial backing to pay for the certification and testing that may be required.'

This will be a wake up call, Mr Beer added, for all those manufacturers who have not yet dipped their toe in the BFRC waters. 'That's not because their products aren't good enough. Nor is it too onerous to achieve a rating, but you do have to have factory production control in place and undertake annual audits by an Independent Agency like BM TRADA. It would be dangerous to be too complacent, as there is a reasonable possibility that by 2010 the regulations will be seeking a C rating as standard.'

And if resources are an issue, he warned, the problem is exacerbated for timber window manufacturers who, unlike their PVCu or aluminium counterparts, cannot rely on systems suppliers. They will have to revisit their designs, to produce windows able to achieve a C rating or better, without any assistance from a profile manufacturer.'

BM TRADA has already identified that the companies able to achieve top energy ratings are those who have invested in research and product development. 'There are no short cuts. The BFRC rating system is definitely setting new, higher standards in the window industry. This has to be good for all concerned, but only if we approach it in the right way.'

- For further information on the BFRC window energy scheme visit www.bmtrada.com or email asumner@bmtrada.com.

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