

Standards

Standardisation by national and international bodies aims to facilitate the exchange of goods and services. It is a reference guide for all parties to define a requirement and to test and control its achievement by the selected goods.

Most countries, if not all, have their national standardisation body. A large number are also members of ISO, the International Standardisation Organisation. All countries participating in ISO are gradually replacing their national standards by the corresponding ISO standards.

Among the many national standards still in use for international trade, we very often find: BS (British Standard), GHOST (Russian Standard), DIN (German Standard), etc

Application

There are 2 different types of standard interesting for us in our supply activities:

- A standard that defines the minimum characteristics for a given product
- A standard that defines the control / testing procedure for a given characteristic

Example: ISO10966 (Textiles – Fabrics for awnings and camping tent specifications)

This standard gives the minimum specifications for camping tent canvas.

Among all the minimum characteristics for several types of tent, it gives, for instance, the required tensile strength for non-coated cotton canvas for the wall of a residential tent (given figure: 85DaN). It also indicates the control procedure to check this value (given procedure: ISO5081).

ISO5081 (Textiles – Woven fabrics – Determination of tensile strength and elongation, strip method)

In this standard, no values are given, but it gives the complete procedure to measure the tensile strength for any type of woven canvas. This includes the sample preparation, the description of the necessary equipment, the measuring process itself, and the format to release the results.

Another type of standard, like the ISO9000 series, or the ISO14000 series, defines entire quality systems.

It is not a procedure in itself, it is a support to establish all the necessary internal procedures.

The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent, together a group of major humanitarian organisations, has established a minimum standard for humanitarian aid, known as the Sphere project.

www.sphereproject.org

Specifications

Red Cross/Red Crescent specifications:

This is the list of characteristics a product should present to ensure the requirements for this product are satisfied.

These characteristics must be supported by realistic applicable control methods. This, in most cases, will be an international or a national standard or sometimes an “in house” procedure.

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National specifications

National states impose national specifications for all products imported in their market. This follows several preoccupations like protection of the consumers, of the local market, and of the national producers. It also requires exporters to conform to the required specifications, this promotes products on export.

Our concern should always be to ensure goods intended for importation in a country conform to

- The national specifications of that country. If they do not, they have to be exceptionally
- Authorised by the appropriate national body.

International specifications

For specific products, international specifications are in place (size of freight containers, quality of fuels, etc). These internationally recognised specifications are presented in ISO standards.

- Other internationally recognised bodies have set up specifications. I.e.: GAFTA for international
- Trade contract for cereals, CEI for international standard on electricals, ECHO for humanitarian
- Aid food product from the EU, etc.

We try to conform, as much as possible, to international specifications for all our standard products.

Inspection

If the above specification issues are well respected, there should be no major problem to manage the specifications with the given standard control procedures, provided the inspection company is well chosen.

These inspections are either performed by external services or internally.

- Legal aspects may impose inspections to be performed by state certified companies.
- Certified Inspection reports are required for most imports and exports.
- Certified inspection reports are also essential to support arbitration with suppliers.