Are you sure it’s safe?
Design. Quality. Security. These are the fundamental building blocks of product safety. Compromising any of these can result in danger and injury. So how can we consistently guarantee that there are no gaps in these areas? Quite simply by ensuring they become a habit.

The key is to make good practice a routine behaviour, teaching people to protect themselves and those around them without even thinking about it. Easier said than done? ISO standards can help, as the repository of state-of-the-art best practice carefully selected by experts and stakeholders. To comply with a standard, an organization must implement—and sustain—a specific set of actions, causing us to learn new habits.

Let us take a closer look at these three building blocks. First things first, design practice focuses on the adequate use of materials in specific applications. Standards set out guidelines on which materials to use and not to use, to ensure designs are sufficiently robust.

Secondly, a quality control system is essential to guarantee that the materials and processes used in manufacturing the product conform to the requirements established by design engineers. Finally, security protocols identify risks and processes used in manufacturing the product conform to the requirements established by design engineers.
The next big thing?

After the smartphone and the tablet, could a smartwatch be the next big thing? CNN’s Business Insider seems to think so.

Companies from Apple and Samsung to Google are reportedly working on their own take on the concept, and a big wave of “smart” watches could soon be hitting the markets. But this is nothing new. In recent years, there have been many attempts to design watches that deliver news or play music, but nothing that makes history. Now, however, a company called Pebble may have hit the jackpot.

The Pebble-designed watch connects with your Android or iPhone via Bluetooth and displays incoming calls, text messages and other notifications. It uses e-ink technology (similar to eReaders like Amazon’s Kindle), which means that looking at the screen is easy even in bright sunlight. Apps specifically designed for the watch can be uploaded directly through your phone’s store. Although existing apps mainly help runners and cyclists track distances and workouts, it will be possible for any developer to create new apps, as they do for phones and tablets.

But the key to the success of the smartwatch might rely on its interoperability and compatibility with other technology. For example, could a smartwatch also be used as a remote control for your TV or sound system? This calls for International Standards. To date, there are thousands of ISO standards making information and communication technologies compatible for all.

Think. Eat. Save.

Each year, 1.3 billion tonnes of food are wasted. This is equivalent to the total production of sub-Saharan Africa. “Think. Eat. Save.”, the theme of this year’s World Environment Day (3 June), aims to combat food waste and loss, and encourage all of us to reduce our “foodprint”.

The event organized by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) is an opportunity to increase awareness of the environmental impact of our food and choices and empower us to make informed decisions.

International Standards can make a significant impact on food production. Their use increases efficiency and helps reduce unnecessary waste by harmonizing requirements and optimizing production processes. Management systems, such as ISO 9001 (quality), ISO 14001 (environment) and ISO 50001 (energy), help organizations optimize processes. In addition, ISO has developed hundreds of standards for the food industry: ISO 16920, ISO 38221, ISO 14024 and ISO 14025 on environmental labelling help organizations communicate about their environmental impact and consumers make informed choices.

UNEP and FAO participate in various ISO technical committees and have been involved in the development of some of these standards.

Mandatory energy audits

Energy audits in France may be making news headlines in the coming months. The French Minister for the Environment, Sustainable Development and Energy, Delphine Batho, recently presented the proposal for a new bill to adopt European Union legislation in the field of sustainable development. One of the provisions stipulates that large companies should be subjected to mandatory energy audits every four years.

If passed, the bill could affect some 5,000 companies in France. Under the projected law, organizations would be required to undergo regular audits, unless they have an energy management system standard in place such as ISO 50001:2011, Energy management systems – Requirements with guidance for use.

ISO 20121’s magic formula


The French event management company, Formule magique, which specializes in events, conventions, symposiums and seminars, has recently achieved ISO 20121 certification.

At Formule magique, considerations on sustainable development revolve around efforts, initiated in 2006, to adopt a new eco-friendly approach to managing events.

The standard enables the company to:

• Act responsibly with respect to its economic, social, societal and environmental impact on the local community
• Enhance its performance and efficiency through careful analysis, a cohesive and structured approach, and well-defined objectives, backed by certification
• Secure long-term relationships with its customers by offering a new constructive approach to their needs
• Anticipate, innovate and create

More than 30 countries and liaison bodies participated in the work

ISO 20121 is specifically designed for organizations specializing in the event industry and was developed by representatives of the field worldwide. It provides a framework to help organizations identify and eliminate, or at the very least minimize, the potentially negative social, economic and environmental impacts of events and capitalize on the positive aspects through improved planning and processes.


The key is to make good practice a routine behaviour.

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Product safety
Creating a safer world for all

The cost of product-related injury and death worldwide exceeds USD 1 trillion per year, says the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). More than ever, product safety is at the forefront of consumer concerns. How can we be sure that the toys our kids play with aren’t harmful? That the coolest new high-tech device won’t overheat and catch fire? Or that the latest wonder cleaner doesn’t give off toxic fumes?

A challenge indeed, since most of the consumer goods we buy are manufactured outside our country of residence, often on a different continent. Globalized trade and the free market have placed product safety at the centre of the economic and societal debate. When safety issues are uncovered, a product recall is often issued, at great cost to the company that has to replace the recalled product or pay damages.

There are many reasons for unsafe products, with inadequate instructions or warnings being the most commonly cited cause in product liability claims. Fraud is another culprit. The counterfeiting of goods is estimated at 5% to 7% of the world’s economies.

Design is key in product safety, which is why International Standards intervene very early on in the supply chain. ISO standards protect the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death caused by consumer goods, offering practical solutions to stakeholders up and down the supply chain – from designers to retailers – in a bid to create a safer world for all.

The following pages highlight some of the salient issues in the battle to protect consumers, from product recall and counterfeit and fraud measures to second-hand goods and market surveillance.
A new standard providing guidelines for consumer product safety is about to have a significant and positive effect on suppliers, products and consumers. ISO 10377:2013, Consumer product safety – Guidelines for suppliers, provides suppliers, such as designers and retailers, with practical guidelines on how to assess and manage risk to supply safe products to the consumer.

ISO 10377 is aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as larger firms and offers risk assessment and management techniques for safer consumer products. In fact, focus groups used a draft of the standard in meetings with SME suppliers to help identify key requirements and assess its usefulness. The standard is divided into four main sections outlining general principles, safe design, safe production and retail safety (see Box overleaf).

Safe and sound

Products are safer when suppliers have a hand in their development, be it at the raw materials, components, sub-assembly preparation, design, manufacturing or distribution stage.

Creating a prototype and checking its production readiness reduce the likelihood of defective products during a production run. Hazard analysis then points out any remaining hazards that might warrant a warning and instructions to the end user.

But safer products also reduce liability. Although ISO 10377 focuses chiefly on product safety, it unsurprisingly also limits the supplier’s responsibility. The upshot is greater safety and reduced liability in one fell swoop. The bottom line: a product with less chance of harbouring latent defects that might inadvertently harm the user.

Regardless of company structure and organization, ISO 10377 will affect all suppliers irrespective of their role in the supply chain and all types of products whatever the origin.

The importance of traceability

Products should be traceable and carry a unique identifier that is labelled, marked or tagged at the source. This also goes for raw materials, components and sub-assemblies. Suppliers should insist on A new standard providing guidelines for consumer product safety is about to have a significant and positive effect on suppliers, products and consumers. ISO 10377:2013, Consumer product safety – Guidelines for suppliers, provides suppliers, such as designers and retailers, with practical guidelines on how to assess and manage risk to supply safe products to the consumer. ISO 10377 is aimed at small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) as well as larger firms and offers risk assessment and management techniques for safer consumer products. In fact, focus groups used a draft of the standard in meetings with SME suppliers to help identify key requirements and assess its usefulness. The standard is divided into four main sections outlining general principles, safe design, safe production and retail safety (see Box overleaf).

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ISO 10377 and the UNEP Chemicals in Products Programme

The newly-released ISO 10377 provides guidance to suppliers of consumer products about steps to ensure that the goods they produce are safe and marketable. As highlighted in the standard, decisions on product design and manufacture require sufficient and reliable information, including on the key aspect of substances present in the product.

Virtually all consumer products contain chemicals that are intentionally added or may be present as impurities. While largely safe to use, many products contain chemicals which constitute a known or suspected hazard and there is a clear and increasing need to understand and communicate on those associated risks.

The International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM), the governing body for The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), a policy framework for the safe production and use of chemicals, has identified as a priority the need for actions to improve access to information on chemicals contained in products. The ICCM has mandated the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to lead a project aimed at facilitating and guiding the provision, availability and access to relevant chemicals-in-products (CiP) information throughout the product life cycle. To that end, UNEP is developing a CiP programme – to be presented to ICCM in 2015 – which will inter alia:

1. Identify the roles and suggestions for responsibilities of the major stakeholder groups throughout the product life cycle for CiP information exchange
2. Develop guidance on what information could be transferred and how information access and exchange could take place to meet the needs of different stakeholder groups throughout the product life cycle
3. Implement pilot projects to demonstrate the applicability of the developed guidance in one or more priority-product sectors (e.g. textiles, toys, building materials and electronics)

There are undeniably areas where ISO 10377 and the CiP programme complement each other, and communication between these two activities will yield benefits to both as they move forward.

By Kevin Munn
Project Officer
United Nations Environment Programme
Chemicals Branch, DTIE

A four-pillar agenda

For the user’s convenience, ISO 10377 is divided into four main sections highlighting specific areas.

- General principles: sketches out the basics such as promoting a product safety culture across the organization, striving for continual improvement, better staff training, record management and document control, and establishing product monitoring and traceability processes.
- Safety aspects of design: addresses design technical specifications, tolerable risk through hazard identification, risk assessment and reduction/elimination, and warnings and instructions on any residual risks to the end user.
- Safety in production: gives practical steps for promoting basic safety principles across the supply chain, with a focus on such aspects as manufacturing practices, design validation, product prototypes, material procurement, tooling, controlling product specifications and component assemblies, testing samples and auditing production runs.
- Safety in the marketplace: specifies the responsibilities incumbent on the importer, distributor and retailer to ensure that the product ordered continues to meet all the safety requirements. This is done through pre-purchase assessments and ongoing data collection once the product reaches its users, to identify any product hazards that were missed during earlier assessments.

ISO 10377 emphasizes the importance of building safety into the product at the design stage, providing guidance for the identification of hazards, reliable risk assessment and steps to reduce potential product risks. It serves as a benchmark to understand and communicate on those associated risks.
Safety equals protection

Mark Kinzie, an ANSI delegate to project committees ISO/PC 240, Product recall, and ISO/PC 243, Consumer product safety, recently stated: “Safety, especially product safety, can mean different things to different people. To an engineer, it’s hazard analysis. To a risk manager, it’s loss of control. To a regulator, it’s compliance. And to a lawyer, it’s liability.” Of course to a consumer, product safety simply means family protection – a fact acknowledged by ISO/PC 243, the project committee in charge of creating this practical guidance document.

ISO 10377 provides practical guidelines on risk assessment and management for safer consumer products.

The standard offers practical guidance to suppliers on consumer product recalls and other corrective actions such as refunds, retrofit, repair, replacement, disposal and public notification. It provides information and other tools that suppliers of all sizes can use in developing a documented and validated product recall programme to:
• Help them implement timely and cost-effective recalls
• Minimize legal and reputation risks
• Reduce health or safety risks to consumers

In the Republic of Korea, the number of recalls increased by about 25% in 2012 when compared 2011

Source: globalrecalls.oecd.org
Primary motivator

ISO 10393 was developed by project committee ISO/PC 240, Product recall. Participants included a good mix of both developed and developing countries such as Australia, Canada, Chile, China, Japan, Malaysia, Russia and the USA. Efforts were made to harmonize this work with other ISO committees developing product safety standards, including ISO/PC 243, Consumer product safety, and ISO/PC 246, Anti-counterfeiting tools.

From the beginning, the primary motivating factor was global consumer protection. We were well aware of the expansion of local businesses into the global marketplace, and the significant competitive advantage that compliance with International Standards can offer entrepreneurs. We need international guidelines that every type of business in every country can implement and follow.

Four key features

Four key features of ISO 10393 underline its practicality and effectiveness:

- It applies to all consumer products except foodstuffs, drugs and cars, and respects local jurisdiction to avoid any conflict with local laws and standards
- Together with ISO 10377, Consumer product safety – Guidelines for suppliers, it offers manufacturers a road map to follow from design to disposal, or from pre-market to post-market (see Figure 1)
- It unifies related standards existing in many countries into a single set of global standards guidelines
- It brings together current global best practices to provide the leading and most up-to-date guidelines

ISO 10393 provides guidelines for everyone, whether in developed or developing countries, and helps competitiveness by offering a road map for manufacturers to follow.

Product safety can now be “designed in”, right from the product planning stage. If there is a safety issue, manufacturers will be able to refer to the guidelines before commencing product recalls. Moreover, the standard will promote consistency in procedures, so if the safety issue occurred in a different country the same guidelines apply everywhere. ISO 10393 also helps companies dispose of their products in a safe and environmentally friendly way.

Impact of ISO 10393

The new standard provides three main benefits:

- Saves time and money with uniform standards and procedures
- Helps organizations maintain brand credibility in case of product safety issues
- Improves international relations among trading countries

ISO 10393 will help manufacturers handle product recalls at local, regional and global levels. The new standard enables greater harmony by providing a common product safety and recall manual. In turn, this will lead to harmonized standards of consumer protection in global trade. There will be one common language and one set of guidelines for product safety and recall behaviours, shared by all.

Beneficial effects

Going forward we expect to see changes in national standards as countries align with ISO 10393. This will happen because it is in the interests of manufacturers and policy makers to minimize the time and money spent on product safety and recall issues. It will be a bit like having an insurance policy – those that follow the guidelines from product design to disposal can feel secure in the knowledge that everything has been done in accordance with a truly International Standard.

And finally, ISO 10393 will help reduce and resolve trading conflicts between countries.

ISO 10393 also helps companies dispose of their products in a safe and environmentally friendly way.
The product recall crisis in 2007 involved almost one billion toys.

On 11 August 2007, Zhang Shuhong, boss of Chinese toymaker Lee Der Industrial Co. Ltd., was found dead on company premises. He was believed to have committed suicide over the recall of nearly a million toys because of fears they contained toxic lead paint. This article reports on initiatives by Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), the US Toy Industry Association, ISO and others to align toy safety standards worldwide, increase transparency, and reduce trade barriers related to toy safety standards and practices.

Why such massive recalls?

The product recall crisis that hit Lee Der Industrial in 2007 was one of several that year involving different toymakers and almost one billion toys. Among standards-related factors leading to the massive recalls were variations in safety specifications imposed on toy exporters by importing countries.

Lead content is a prime example. Toy manufacturers faced difficulties in meeting specifications for leachable lead, total lead limits and age grading. Ineffective or non-existent consumer product regulations meant that toys were being recalled in some, but not all, countries. This raised concerns among many stakeholders, especially organizations working with children and consumers.

In response, APEC, co-sponsored by the US Toy Industry Association, took steps to strengthen consumer product safety standards and practices. The result was a two-year project known as the APEC Toy Safety Initiative led by the USA. Its key objectives were to:

- Increase transparency
- Encourage better alignment of toy safety standards
- Reduce unnecessary barriers to trade

Let’s talk about it

Two major components of the initiative were a Regulator Dialogue on Toy Safety and an Open Dialogue on Toy Safety for All Stakeholders.

The first initiative involved carrying out a survey among APEC member countries on toy safety regulatory practices and standards development. The results highlighted the diversity of regulatory regimes in the APEC region. Most APEC countries refer to ISO 8124-1:2012, Safety of toys – Part 1: Safety aspects related to mechanical and physical properties. Other major reference standards are ASTM F963, Standard Consumer Safety Specification for Toy Safety, and EN-71, Safety of toys.

Several countries depended on toy recall notifications from the European Union and the USA. But regulators in some developing
countries take no action when these state that the affected product is only distributed in the USA or Canada. Feedback from participating countries made it clear that toy safety was no longer an effort to be undertaken by a single country alone.

In response to emerging toy hazards related to design, jaw entrapment, folding mechanisms and magnets, Kitty Pilarz, Senior Director, Mattel Product Safety, Fisher-Price, encouraged regulators to review International Standards before drafting unique country-specific standards. Ian Anderson, Acting Director of Operations, International Council of Toy Industries Care Foundation Asia Limited, attributed obstacles to the harmonization of standards to regulator motivations, unique country laws and demography. The role of customs and validation of test reports were also highlighted.

Among the outcomes of the APEC Toy Safety Initiatives is a reference document outlining different toy safety systems in the region. Emphasis was also placed on strengthening risk assessment capacity among regulators and manufacturers.

Enhancing standards

These initiatives led to an ISO Advisory Panel being set up, comprising ISO technical experts, standards bodies and consumer groups. Its purpose was to determine priorities for ISO technical committee ISO/TC 181, Safety of toys, and facilitate cooperation and harmonization among standards bodies. ISO/COPOLCO represented consumer interests, while regulators and toy industry interests were represented through the International Consumer Product Safety Caucus (ICPSC) and the International Council of Toy Industries. ISO/TC 181 also participated in the review of ASTM F963 to explore enhancements to technical standards that could address potential toy hazards related to impact, magnets and projectiles.

Progress

Progress brought by the APEC Toy Safety Initiative was reviewed at a meeting of the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization in 2011. Regulators were encouraged to look to International Standards first, rather than create unique requirements, and share safety information essential to successful standards development. In turn, they acknowledged the importance of International Standards in providing the means to improve product safety and address emerging hazards.

Key proposals and actions are summarized in Figure 1. The conference emphasized the importance of participating in international standardization to support the harmonization of toy safety and other consumer product standards.

Work is already underway, for example, to align standards for corded window coverings, chair-top booster seats and baby slings, and to track labels for strollers, involving representatives from Australia, Canada, the European Commission and the USA. The outcomes of this project were communicated to the WTO’s Workshop on Regulatory Cooperation. Carter Keithley, President of the Toy Industry Association, has emphasized the need to harmonize US, EU and ISO toy standards for cadmium (toxic metal).

Reducing risks

Despite various technical obstacles against the alignment process, some important mechanisms for greater coordination among regulators, consumers, standards developers and the industry have been achieved.

The APEC Toy Safety Initiative and subsequent work has reiterated the importance of transparent and open processes in the international harmonization of standards and in regulatory approaches to product safety. Developing countries and their standards bodies must take heed of the outcomes of this project and provide adequate resources for regulatory and standards development activities.

These initiatives demonstrate sustained efforts to reduce the risk of accidents involving young consumers, and to help prevent future tragedies of the type that befell the unfortunate Zhang Shuhong.
A major challenge is to weaken the demand for counterfeits.

Trade in counterfeit goods is now a serious issue in Fiji and neighbouring island countries where weak consumer protection and a lack of standards have allowed unscrupulous traders to continue their practices unhindered. A combination of outdated consumer protection laws, the lack of appropriate standards in most product categories, ineffective border controls, the high price of genuine products and a poor complaints culture are key challenges for the country. The scenario has led to an influx of counterfeit products, from cosmetics to mobile phone handsets or electrical white goods, and the local market is flooded with many unknown, or relatively new, brands of undisclosed origin.

While efforts are underway to establish non-food labelling requirements, product standards are rarely implemented or non-existent. For example, there are no effective standards covering mobile phone handsets or electrical white goods, and the local market is flooded with many unknown, or relatively new, brands of undisclosed origin.

Action at the border

Border control is little discussed, although it is key to helping Fiji rid itself of counterfeit products. Often these goods pass through customs without conforming to minimum standards. For example, despite local Food and Safety Regulations coming into force in 2009, food products that did not comply with labelling and disclosure requirements were still being sold in 2011.

Market surveillance by the Consumer Council of Fiji still uncovers food items carrying illegal foreign language labelling in retail outlets around the country. In its view, the Fiji Revenue and Customs Authority must play a much more active role in establishing and enforcing standards since, as the gatekeeper, it is responsible for filtering imports. The council recommends better coordination with, and education of, customs authorities to improve detection and embargoing of counterfeit or dangerous goods.

While border control is important, the council acknowledges that there is also a local manufacturing sector engaged in the production of counterfeit or substandard goods. A case in point is Chardin hair gel, produced locally and sold cheaply in a form that is visually similar to genuine quality imports.

Another challenge is the fact that market surveillance authorities operate under different administrative sectors in different ministries, where bureaucracy and confidentiality take their toll. A solution is to develop greater administrative cooperation between those bodies involved in market surveillance.

A need for standards

There is a pressing need to review, strengthen and expand Fiji’s standards authority. The Department of National
Measurement and Trade Standards (DNMTS) currently operates within the Ministry of Industry and Trade. However, its role in protecting consumers from counterfeit, substandard and unsafe products must be made more prominent. The department’s consumer protection function is often understated. Few know of its existence, and it does not provide an effective complaints service, unlike other consumer protection agencies.

The council believes that DNMTS should be an independent entity with appropriate powers and the authority to develop and establish standards. As an independent statutory organization, the department would be able to shed much of the bureaucracy and related obstacles that currently hinder its function. Fiji’s consumer protection laws lack the compensatory element that would enable redress to extend beyond penalizing offending traders, to providing appropriate compensation (monetary or otherwise). This has led the council to propose a Consumer Claims Tribunal.

Taking advantage

A major challenge for consumer protection agencies is to weaken the demand for counterfeit goods. This is a serious challenge in Fiji given that many genuine imported goods are priced beyond the reach of most consumers. The desire to own new products and prominent brands drives Fijians to buy fake versions that appear to be real. For example, smartphones are still very expensive in Fiji – most leading brands are priced above FJD 1000 (about USD 560). This has driven consumers to buy counterfeit phones, enabling unscrupulous dealers to flourish.

Traders take advantage of the gullibility of consumers in selling counterfeit products that are either close to, or much lower than, the price of the genuine item. When the price is high, consumers may assume the product is genuine, as “expensive” is often perceived as an indicator of authenticity and quality.

Protecting the consumer

The lack of an effective complaints culture in Fiji makes life difficult for consumer protection agencies. While the council has identified many counterfeit goods on the market, it still finds that most consumers are reluctant to lodge formal complaints since the embarrassment and stigma associated with purchasing a fake can be a deterrent. It believes that consumer protection agencies should provide facilities to encourage consumers to complain or express concerns about counterfeit and substandard products. This can be achieved by providing incident reporting channels for the general public via telephone hotlines or online reporting, for example.

Although counterfeit goods have found a ready market in Fiji, standards, enhanced consumer protection laws, good market surveillance programmes, agency cooperation and strong border controls can protect consumers against such unscrupulous trade. These measures, together with effective consumer complaints and reporting facilities, can also discourage those that profit from such practices.

### Genuine imports are priced beyond the reach of most consumers.

Premila Kumar is CEO of the Consumer Council of Fiji. She was also Manager of Investment Facilitation and Project Monitoring at the Fiji Islands Trade and Investment Bureau.

The author
Inadequate instructions or warnings are the most common defect cited in product liability claims.

Clear instructions = Safer products

Making instructions more intelligible to users

Just how important are clear instructions to product safety? Here’s one indicator: inadequate instructions or warnings are the most common defect cited in product liability claims, and one of the most common reasons for product recalls.

The effectiveness of instructions depends on how many users read and follow them. However, few product safety standards specify how prominent warnings need to be, or require instructions to be checked for intelligibility. This is particularly important when the intended user is a consumer without any professional training.

Unsurprisingly therefore, most product injuries are a result of user “error”.

People make mistakes and, of course, as the saying goes, “to err is human”. Fortunately, by following established good practice in preparing instructions, users can be helped and guided towards a better understanding of how to use a product more effectively and greater awareness of how to avoid getting into dangerous situations.

Safer and happier consumers

Freed from confusing diagrams and gobbledegook translations, consumers can be safer, happier with the product, and more likely to buy again. This aim is now more
Product recalls across the world

Number of product recalls by country of origin*

21% in the Americas
5% in Europe
72% in Asia

TOP 3
Number of recalled products by hazard*

Fire and fire-related burns: 1562
Choking: 837
Laceration: 503

20% in other countries

Numbers of recalls by product category*

- Toys: 17%
- Child products (not including toys): 25%
- Outdoor products: 10%
- Sports and recreation products: 17%
- Specialty products: 1%
- Home products: 30%

Sources & links:

*Research date: 2013-04-28
#product_recalls_world
It is 30 years since ISO and IEC first issued joint ISO/IEC Guide 37 offering guidance on making instructions more intelligible to consumers. Since then, many manufacturers have ignored accumulating good practice or remained unaware that any guidance exists.

Techniques to improve the effectiveness of warnings and safety information have emerged from experiments, accident analyses, and conceptual theory in ergonomics and related fields, and from the potential offered by new electronic media.

The new ISO/IEC Guide 37:2012, Instructions for use of products by consumers, takes all this into account and explains how the new ISO/IEC 82079 series can be referenced in product standards to bring it to manufacturers’ attention and ensure that the evaluation of instructions becomes an integral part of product certification procedures.

Increased role and impact

Many product standards already include a general requirement for the provision of instructions for use (and/or requirements for specific warnings). Therefore, as each standard comes up for review, its technical committee (TC) will need to assess what sort of reference to the ISO/IEC 82079 series might help reduce injuries due to improper use of products by the user.

To assist TCs, the revised edition of ISO/IEC Guide 37 provides a short introduction to the principles of good communication of instructions and warnings. It has a checklist for standards writers and offers customizable model clauses suitable for inserting requirements into product standards to make a reference to ISO/IEC 82079-1.

Both documents have taken into account the potential of new media and the Internet to offer instructional material in alternative formats such as large print, speech and additional languages. They emphasize, however, the importance of understanding the capabilities of a product’s target group, whether this includes elderly or disabled users, trained professionals, or children and adolescents.

Future directions

The next step is to agree to a “route map” for the development of subsequent parts of ISO/IEC 82079. While there is no necessity for additional parts of ISO/IEC 82079 specific to each product sector, extra guidance is desirable for some specific forms of instruction.

For example, ISO/COPOLOCO, the ISO Committee on consumer policy, sees a need for another part devoted to instructions for products intended for assembly by consumers. This is where sequential detailed illustrations are often critical to avoiding misinterpretation.

Meanwhile, for electronic products, it has been suggested that an additional part of ISO/IEC 82079 may be needed to address screen-based instructions where the information presented depends on users’ actions and sensors of product operation.

More importantly, in order to be most effective, product instructions and their presentation need to be integrated into a product’s conformity assessment procedure, national safety laws and contractual specifications. As awareness of ISO/IEC 82079 and ISO/IEC Guide 37 grows and their use in product standards increases, consumers will less often feel frustrated by legal claims, designers of hardware, software or packaging, compliance managers, importers, buyers, and those who compile, commission or evaluate user instructions.
Market surveillance
Protecting consumers and ensuring product and service quality

Although market surveillance may appear to be the preserve of governments for ensuring compliance with technical regulations, many manufacturing and service organizations develop market surveillance systems for their own purposes. However, standards and product regulation play a key role in promoting good practice and can help extend the common ground between countries and regions when it comes to product quality and conformity.

The marketplace can be a jungle where the laws of supply and demand do not necessarily operate in the best interests of suppliers and consumers—especially in unregulated markets. The need for market surveillance is more important than ever in protecting consumer safety and ensuring the quality of products and services.

Many manufacturers and service providers use market surveillance to control how their products behave in the market. For example, the distribution chain—particularly in perishable goods such as foodstuffs—can have a significant effect on quality. Sampling products on the market is an important form of market surveillance, and can provide a different perspective on how well a quality system is working in the factory. Sampling competitive products is equally essential for monitoring developments by competitors.

For consumer associations, market surveillance is an important tool to alert consumers to safety, health and other risks, recommend “best buys”, enable comparative testing among like products, and monitor the growing number of websites that offer products and services. Those offering travel and restaurant recommendations, for example, should also fall under the scope of market surveillance.

In this article we discuss the role of standards and standardization in supporting market surveillance and look at regulatory directives and best-practice voluntary guidelines in the European Union and Brazil, based on our familiarity with those markets.
use of ISO and IEC standards as tools for providing presumption of conformity with legal requirements or, in other cases, as preferred tools for assessing product safety. The General Product Safety Directive also provides essential tools supporting identification, information, withdrawal and recall of unsafe products. It establishes not only the basis for the roles of European and national authorities, but also the obligation for manufacturers, importers and distributors to ensure the safety of products on the market. The EU’s RAPEX (Rapid Alert Recall System) system, applicable to non-food and non-pharmaceutical consumer products in the EU, makes one of the best-known contributions to product safety and is accessible to any interested party.

The case of Brazil

Brazil’s National Council of Metrology, Standardization and Industrial Quality and the Brazilian Regulatory Committee have published The Brazilian Guide on Good Regulatory Practices, which includes provisions for market surveillance. Two important excerpts from the guide state:

• Market surveillance is an activity that complements the inspection work and may be expensive and laborious. However, it allows for important results, both to keep non-conforming products, services, goods, processes or personnel from reaching the market, and for its greatly important educational role, allowing for an opportunity to evaluate the regulation’s implementation efficacy.

• The market surveillance process should make its results available and divulge them in a wide-ranging manner in order for those involved or for those affected by the regulation to be informed.

Standards and technical regulations

Standardization is a widely used tool in support of market surveillance. However, incorrect or outdated references to standards are too often used as an easy (and cheap) way to identify noncompliant products during market surveillance campaigns. Nevertheless, standardization plays a very important role in supporting technical regulations, as well as market surveillance, through:

• Product standards, establishing the requirements to be fulfilled
• Standards for test methods, sampling, vocabularies, etc.
• Standards for conformity assessment

Conformity assessment

The requirements established in conformity assessment standards provide an essential reference for testing and assessing compliance to regulations in force in a market. Therefore, it is necessary for market surveillance and customs authorities to maintain close liaisons with the national standard bodies and with the latest updates of standards relevant to legislation.

For conformity assessment, the ISO/CASCO Toolbox, developed by the ISO Committee on conformity assessment (www.iso.org/casco), provides normative documents that are recognized worldwide as the basis for acceptance of bodies participating in the “conformity assessment infrastructure.” ISO/IEC 17000:2004, Conformity assessment – Vocabulary and general principles, defines surveillance as the “systematic iteration of conformity assessment activities as a basis for maintaining the validity of the statement of conformity”, and provides a functional approach to those activities.

Regarding surveillance it states: The needs of users drive such activities. For example, an object of conformity assessment may change over time, which could affect its continuing fulfillment of specified requirements. Or, users may demand ongoing demonstration that specified requirements are fulfilled; for example, when a product is produced continuously.
Good packaging design is a worldwide concern, for it enables safe and comfortable use of the product irrespective of age, perceptual and cognitive ability, physical mobility, language, and culture. ISO technical committee ISO/TC 122, Packaging, is directly responsible for the development of nearly 40 International Standards on packaging design that address social, safety, health or environmental concerns, and meet the needs of global consumers. ISO 11156:2011 on accessible design of packaging provides a framework for designing packaging that properly identifies content and is easy to handle, open and dispose of.

Visual, tactile and child-resistant

Good packaging displays visual cues about the safe handling of transport units with respect to storage temperature limits, sunlight exposure and stackability in accordance with ISO 780:1997, Packaging – Pictorial marking for handling of goods. They also often feature tactile warnings, contained in ISO 11683:1997, Packaging – Tactile warnings of danger – Requirements, which enable visually handicapped people ascertain whether a substance or preparation is dangerous. And packaging must be child-resistant to protect little ones against accidentally opening medications and other potentially harmful materials. The recently published ISO 13127:2012 specifies test methods for reclosable child-resistant packaging. Such packaging has in fact proved so successful that it is often adult-resistant as well!

Tracking and tracing

Traceability of food and other products is made possible by ISO standardized bar codes, two-dimensional symbols, and radio-frequency identification (RFID) at each stage of the supply chain. These technologies provide critical machine-readable information at the production, packaging and shipping stages.

Tracking and tracing the product and its information at each stage of a supply chain (production, processing, distribution, and sale) improves safety by ensuring first-expired/first-out product rotation and allowing efficient recall procedures, automating warranty procedures, and reducing counterfeit products.

Smart packages

In today’s interconnected society, location-based services and unique identification systems have become indispensible to the safety and reliability of consumer products. “Smart packages” have sensor-enabled functions conveying detailed information about whether the barrier characteristics and special functions provided by the packager are working.
Good packaging design is a worldwide concern.

normally, the imminence of the expiry date, and any problems arising along the distribution route.

On this topic, four new International Standards are being developed that specify smart containerized cargo (ISO 18574), smart packages (ISO 18575), smart returnable transport items such as pallets (ISO 18576), and smart shipping containers (ISO 18577).

Smart answers

These “smart items” are able to answer the six problem-solving questions identified by Rudyard Kipling over a century ago in his poem from the Just So Stories: “I keep six honest serving-men (They taught me all I knew): Their names are What and Why and When And How and Where and Who…”

With apologies to the celebrated English poet and author, the supply chain submits there is yet another honest man missing, whose name is “Which” … and, as in Shakespeare’s Macbeth, there are three “Whiches” - “Which one”, “Which group” and “Which transport unit”. These nine “questions” underpin the very heart of supply chain traceability, tracking, and the chain of custody (see Table 1).

Health and safety

Smart products can improve health and safety by informing an ageing population of which medication they are taking and what dosage has been prescribed. A pill bottle can be read by an RFID reader or a two-dimensional symbol reader capable of accessing an Internet URL (uniform resource locator) displayed on the bottle, to activate a voice message confirming the prescription.

Then, there is the safety of fruits, vegetables and meats in the supply chain. A “best before” or “do not consume after” date is calculated from the time the food was harvested from the farm, in presumed environmental conditions, to its arrival on store shelves. The proverbial “cold chain” assumes that the product will have been kept within a set temperature range during transport from the farm to the store. However, simply noting that the temperature was 4 °C when placed in the transport vehicle and 4 °C when it arrived at the store does not guarantee that 4 °C were maintained throughout the trip. Nowadays, sensors on containers and communications from the transport unit to the supply chain monitors can signal if a pre-set temperature threshold is breached.

Encoding a URL on a chemical container to access the product’s Material Safety Data Sheet (MSDS) is another example of “smart packaging”. Today’s two-dimensional symbols and RFID are constrained by the number of characters in the MSDS. This URL, which is easy to encode within the limits of the 2D symbol, could then link wirelessly to the Internet accessing the full MSDS that could then be displayed on a mobile device.

The next decade

ISO/TC 122 and the packaging community are working diligently to improve the structure and recyclability of packages, and the information that they carry. There is little doubt that the next decade will see dramatic advances and many new applications in smart packaging, and further improvements in packaging safety.

Figure 1 shows a two-dimensional MSDS symbol that can be read by any commercial off-the-shelf mobile phone QR (quick response) code reader with network connectivity.

Figure 2 illustrates the communications route from the package to the mobile phone, network and database, and the reply with MSDS information returned to the mobile device confirming the need for special care in handling the package.
In every batch of NR concentrated latex production, several parameters have to be determined to control its quality. These include dry rubber content, total solid content, non-rubber content, magnesium content, volatile fatty acid number and pH value. ISO, TISI and TRF have been working together to provide a cleaner greener laboratory testing methodology for producers of natural rubber concentrated latex. The new method uses sulfide instead of cyanide to achieve equal testing precision and accuracy.

**Cyanide warning**

Cyanide is commonly used in magnesium testing in rubber latex; however, it is highly toxic and has no strong smell or colour to warn the user of its hazardous nature. It also liberates toxic gas when in contact with acid, poisons aquatic organisms and may cause long-term damage in the aquatic environment.

Great care is therefore required in handling cyanide before, during and after the analysis. Before disposal, cyanide waste needs special treatment. The best method is oxidation, a process that requires additional work, care, skill and expense.

Even when cyanide-containing chemicals are used at a low level during quality controls, ISO experts have felt the responsibility and need to develop a new method that avoids its use.

**Necessary evil?**

Magnesium content is a crucial parameter used to describe the quality and performance of the raw product. In concentrated NR latex, magnesium content should be under 40 parts per million because higher concentrations could affect rubber particle coagulation.

Cyanide is a well-known and efficient means of determining magnesium content using a method known as titrimetry.

**Much better method**

However, in the new, safer and more environmental friendly method, sulfide ion replaces cyanide ion.

For well over 60 years, sulfide ion has been well known in metal qualitative analysis for its strong reaction with most of the transition metals. Transition metals in sulfide form are more stable than in cyanide form.

Sulfide has therefore been chosen as an acceptable, less toxic replacement for cyanide.

The new method for determining magnesium content in NR latex is precise, accurate and reliable. Importantly, sulfide ion as sodium hydrogen sulfide (NaHS) is three times less toxic than cyanide.

Although sulfide waste does not need any special treatment, the post-analysis addition of lime or calcium hydroxide prevents the formation of sulfide gas.

The new method’s precision and accuracy compares well to the cyanide method. Its interlaboratory precision has been determined in accordance with ISO/TR 9272:2005, Rubber and rubber products – Determination of precision for test method standards.

The new method Determination of magnesium content of field and concentrated natural rubber latex by titration (cyanide-free method) is expected to be published early 2014. 

**The author**

Dr. Wilairat Cheewasedtham is one of the Project Leaders of ISO/TC 45, Rubber and rubber products, SC 3, Raw materials (including latex) for use in the rubber industry, WG 2, Latex.

**Note:** The full article is available on ISO online.
ISO's 2012 Annual Report outlining the organization's performance last year and its future ambitions is now available on ISO's Website.

“...ISO looked to inspire innovative solutions for all industry sectors...” comments ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele. “We want to give our customers the tools for a simpler, faster and better approach to develop, access and use ISO standards. Exactly how well did ISO do? It’s all here in the ISO Annual Report 2012.”

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- Videos of our principal officers sharing their vision for ISO
- Presentations highlighting ISO's work in today's most dynamic sectors, including energy, information and communication technology, and sustainability, and
- An interactive map featuring our members and their participation in technical work at the end of 2012

Like the rest of iso.org, our Annual Report 2012 is responsive, meaning that it looks great on smartphones and tablets as well as desktop computers.

Users can also benefit from a fold-out leaflet containing additional infographics and most of the key figures contained on the Web version. This leaflet can be ordered in paper form from the ISO Store.

Looking ahead to 2013 and beyond, the ISO Annual Report examines the organization's future ambitions to deliver solutions for tomorrow's global challenges and to assist business and economies to recover from difficult times.

As recently elected ISO President Tony Hill says in his video message, "My appointment comes at a time when the world is looking to come out of this recession that we've been in for the last four to five years. Standards have to make sure that they are part of this resurgence."

ISO General Assembly 2013

The 2013 ISO General Assembly will take place from 18 to 20 September in St. Petersburg, Russia. This 36th ISO General Assembly will be hosted by the Federal Agency of Technical Regulating and Metrology (GOST R) on the theme of: “ISO – Simpler, faster and better to meet our customer's needs.”

The General Assembly is the highest governing body of ISO and brings together key decision-makers in the world of standardization. As ISO Secretary-General Rob Steele wrote in the invitation to all ISO member bodies, correspondent and subscriber members, “It is an opportunity for all ISO members to get the most from their membership by sharing ideas and best practice, making useful contacts in the standardization field and shaping the global standardization agenda.”

In addition to the General Assembly plenary sessions, an open session will give the opportunity to participants to visit local industries and discover how standards are applied in their context. The full week’s timetable will include meetings organized by the ISO Committee on developing country matters (ISO/DEVCOC), the Technical Management Board and the Council.

Further information about this important event will be sent to interested parties in the months to come: the General Assembly programme, the Website URL, all working documents and the open session programme.

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ISO has members all over the world (163 countries at the time of publication). We recently published an interactive map on our Website that truly shows our global nature. When you select a country, details of the member body and their participation in technical work are displayed.

Scan the QR code!
www.iso.org/iso/iso_members

Come and learn more about our international network!
The Russian Federation Agency on Technical Regulating and Metrology (GOST R) will host the 36th ISO General Assembly in St. Petersburg, Russia, from 16 to 21 September 2013. GOST R President Grigory Elkin explains why the Agency is organizing this year’s Assembly and how Russia’s commitment to International Standards as a global solution is stronger than ever.

**ISO Focus+:** Before we turn our attention to the 36th ISO General Assembly, could you briefly describe the mission of GOST R and how it has evolved over the years? How do you see your leadership in such fields as aeronautics and space, the safety of amusement rides and amusement devices?

**G.I. Elkin:** Roststandart, the Russian Federation’s national standardization body, was created in the USSR in 1925. Standardization was already an effective instrument of economic development in the Soviet Union. Later, the scientific and technical revolution of the 1950s and 1960s further increased the role of standards, and international partnerships in the standardization field became a prerequisite for the development of trade with other countries.

In this day and age, it is important to get the business sector’s input in the development of national standards—which can be harmonized with the International Standards—to modernize Russia’s economy and help Russian industry reinvent itself and become more competitive. That is why cooperation with international organizations of standardization and metrology is the essence of Rosstandart’s activity today.

The USSR, which once encompassed “Russian national standards”, from ISO’s inception, GOST R has always been an active contributor to the organization, supplying three ISO presidents in the persons of A.E. Vyatkin (1962-1964), V.V. Boytsov (1977-1979) and, more recently, B.S. Aleshin (2011-2012). Over the years, Russian experts have been part of the ISO Council, the Technical Management Board, the Central Secretariat and technical committees.

GOST R is a member of the ISO committees ISO/DEVCO, ISO/CASCO, ISO/CPOLCO and ISO/REMCO. Russia intends to participate more actively in ISO technical committees.

In past years, the plenary meeting of ISO/TC 254, Safety of amusement rides and amusement devices, a Russian initiative, and the meetings of ISO/TC 20, Aerospace terminology, and ISO/TC 67, Materials, equipment and offshore structures for petroleum, petrochemical and natural gas industries, have taken place on Russian soil.

Russia also held the kick-off meeting of ISO/TC 67/SC 9, Arctic operations. This year, there are plans to hold a meeting of subcommittee ISO/TC 20/SC 30, Aerospace fluid systems and components, as well as the plenary meeting of technical committee ISO/TC 20, Aircraft and space vehicles, in 2014. We are not only trying to be leaders in these technical committees, we are also making plans to branch out into other fields of relevance, such as systematic reliability in electrical engineering.

In a bid to support Russia’s industry, Rosstandart is working on Russian-language versions of existing ISO standards. There are at present over 1800 standards in Russian on the ISO server and the Russian section of the ISO portal is now operational.

ISO Focus+: What inspired you to put forward Russia’s candidacy to host ISO’s next General Assembly in 2013? And why was St. Petersburg chosen over other major cities?

**G.I. Elkin:** The rapidly expanding role of international standardization in our country, especially since joining the World Trade Organization (WTO), is our primary motivation, spurred by globalization, the exchange of technologies and scientific ideas, and the strengthening of economic partnerships.

We see the ISO General Assembly 2013 as an important step for Russia, first and foremost as a means to promote international standardization in our country, but also to encourage the business community to get involved in the development of standards. Holding the General Assembly in Russia is confirmation of the country’s growing authority in the field of international standardization.

Choosing St. Petersburg as the venue for this event is no accident either, as this city is one of the country’s largest scientific

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of Peter the Great, is one of the symbols of “The Bronze Horseman,” an equestrian statue allowing coordination on an international level.

We plan to address such key areas as trade facilitation, quality of life, innovation, protection of the environment, information technologies and education, focusing on what standardization and ISO’s business model should be like in order to provide stability on all levels, and particularly in the above sectors.

Rosstandart’s role will be to support ISO’s efforts in the development and distribution of International Standards for sustainable development. In recent years, ISO and IEC have developed hundreds of standards containing requirements that promote sustainable development in areas such as ecological management, quality management, power management and social responsibility. Rosstandart took an active part in the creation of these documents. Nowadays, the technical regulations adopted by the Russian Federation and Customs Union on security provisions, environmental protection, energy efficiency and resource conservation are fully compliant with the sustainable development strategy.

ISO Focus+: This is not the first time Russia hosts the ISO General Assembly. What has changed since the event was last held in Moscow (during the USSR) in 1967 and what would you like the delegates to take away from their visit?

G.I. Elkin: Hosting the ISO General Assembly in 1967 was a Party and Government decision. It was another country back then – the USSR. Today, the Russian economy is based on market relations. Russia has become a member of WTO and must adhere to the regulations of a world market whose main aim is to facilitate international barter. International Standards, which encapsulate state-of-the-art scientific and technological know-how, quality, reliability, safety and sustainability, have become an effective way of benchmarking the competitiveness of products and services.

I hope that delegates at the 2013 General Assembly will not only participate actively in the discussion of important strategic questions on international standardization, but that they will also take home beautiful memories of St. Petersburg, often referred to as the “Venice of the North,” of Russian hospitality, and of the warm friendly atmosphere and efficient organization of this event.

ISO Focus+: Where do you see GOST R in five years? What new directions do you see the organization taking?

G.I. Elkin: Following Russia’s involvement in WTO, the role of Rosstandart has expanded to support the development of the country’s technical regulations, economic growth, product competitiveness, and consumer protection.

The concept for developing a national standardization system for the Russian Federation by 2020 was approved by the Russian Federation Government in 2012. Today, the renovation of the national standards fund has reached 8% a year, putting it on a par with developed countries, but we are planning to raise this figure to 10% or 12% and increase harmonization between Russian national standards and International Standards.

Work began in 2012 to prepare the Federal Law for standardization in the Russian Federation and will closely follow the recommendations made by ISO and other international organizations. The new law will determine the role of state policy in the area of standardization, provide opportunity to use national standards in normative activity, as well as speed up and simplify the development of legislative and regulatory legal acts.
Akebono Brake Industry Co., Ltd., of Saitama, Japan, a leading manufacturer of braking systems for the automotive, rail transportation and industrial machinery sectors, has enhanced its ISO 9001 quality management system (QMS) by implementing technical specification ISO/TS 16949, the automotive industry-specific standard that defines the QMS requirements for the design, development, production, installation and service of automotive-related products. Since integrating the two systems in 2011, the company reports “drastically reduced market claims” and greater success in overseas markets.

The benefits of ISO 9001 implementation, seen in steadily improving quality and reduced customer claims, began as early as 1996 when Akebono Brake first achieved the QMS certification. However, several issues surfaced a few years later. As time passed since ISO 9001 certification, our quality activities may have gradually become a matter of routine. The number of claims, which had been decreasing, also began to increase again,” explains Shigeru Kanama, Quality Assurance Department specialist at Akebono Brake.

“Not just certification”

Top management acknowledged the problem and pointed the way forward. “The President requested us to think that the purpose was not just to acquire certification, but also how we could improve our business by acquiring certification. I believe this approach led to our later success,” says Kiyoshi Dejima, former Managing Executive Officer and Head of the Quality Assurance Division.

The turnaround started when group company Akebono Brake Sanyo Manufacturing decided to apply for ISO/TS 16949 certification, in response to demands from North American auto manufacturers. In addition to fulfilling those demands, the company realized that ISO/TS 16949 certification and implementation would actually be a benefit during business negotiations.

More than automotive

After assessing the merits of ISO/TS 16949, Akebono Brake decided to implement the automotive sector standard across the entire organization. Group companies achieved certification, in turn, from 2008 (see Figure 1).

The company has also achieved ISO/TS 16949 certification of its overseas sites, following further expansion into Asia, Europe and North America, and intends to continue integrating this certification process in the future (see Figure 2).

Although ISO/TS 16949 is designed for the automobile industry, it is also an effective standard for the manufacture of any product. In fact, the standard for the railway industry adds the requirements of ISO/TS 16949 and JISQ 9100 in 2011, the company reports “drastically reduced market claims” and greater success in overseas markets.

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Some time had passed since the acquisition of the ISO 9001 certification in 1997, and the QMS activities had become “a matter of routine”. Overseas automobile manufacturers were demanding the acquisition of the ISO/TS 16949 certification during business negotiations. The QMS steering committee inputs on-site issues to upper management at all times, the speed of improvements has become quicker.

The acquisition of ISO/TS 16949 enables highly accurate quality control, and market claims have decreased further.

As discussions and negotiations with overseas automobile manufacturers can be held from the common viewpoint of ISO/TS 16940, agreements can be concluded more smoothly than before.

Since the QMS Steering Committee inputs on-site issues to upper management at all times, the speed of improvements has become quicker.

The QMS steering committee at Akebono Brake plays an important role in ISO/TS 16949 implementation. Each division head sits on the committee and reports regularly on the issues and improvement processes. These meetings have proved to be significant because they provide an effective forum for participants to discuss their plans and express opinions, which are then reported to upper management.

“The committee results are reported in the executive meeting, and the issues in each division are input to the division managers and directors as an on-site opinion. This management review is performed monthly, making it easier to influence employee awareness and enhance the speed of improvements as well. The significance and importance of these meetings has been well recognized across the company,” says Mr. Dejima.

Fewer claims…

As a result of the effectiveness of the QMS steering committee, ISO/TS 16949-based practices have become integrated into employees’ daily business. There have been many beneficial effects, key being a marked reduction in the number of claims (see Figure 3).

“Issues which used to be considered ‘not a problem’ are now being brought up as real issues, thus prompting a steady flow of improvement. The focus on quality has become sharper and this shows up as a result of preventive measures. The original concept for implementing ISO/TS 16949 was to satisfy end users, which, in turn, leads to greater satisfaction for our automobile manufacturing customers. Market claims are made after the end users actually drive a vehicle, so it takes time for changes in the number of claims to appear. Recently, market claims have begun to decrease further,” says Mr. Dejima.

…more enquiries from Europe

Since 2007, Akebono Brake has been the official supplier of brakes to the Vodafone McLaren Mercedes Formula 1 Team, whose driver, Lewis Hamilton, became World Champion in 2008. The connection with McLaren has stimulated an increase in the number of enquiries from European automobile manufacturers, leading to business expansion.

“ISO/TS 16949 certification is significant not only for European automobile manufacturers, but also when we hold discussions with other auto makers. Business negotiations progress more smoothly since we acquired certification, and customers trust us because we can provide supporting documentation, and speak from the same point of view when there are enquiries. We recognized that this certification is very useful when there are new business opportunities. ISO/TS 16949 has become the pride of our employees, who are in turn increasingly motivated by it,” Mr. Dejima explains.

Positive results continue

Akebono Brake Industry Co. Ltd., continues to see positive results from the achievement of ISO/TS 16949, including business expansion and a reduction in market claims. It attributes these benefits to the original initiative of its audit office – which subsequently involved the entire company – and to the continued support of certification body LRQA in performing assessments and certifications.

From left to right: Kiyoshi Dejima, former Managing Executive Officer and Head of the Quality Assurance Division, Shigeyoshi Kanazawa, Specialist, ISO/TS 16949 Implementation Section of the Quality Assurance Division, and Hirokatsu Takahashi, Specialist Implementation Section of the Quality Audit Section, Quality Audit Department, Akebono Brake Industry Co. Ltd.
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ISO 9000 and ISO 14000

Water

Arguably our most precious commodity and key to our survival.

Although essential for life, water supplies are burdened by drought, water shortages, climate change, contamination and pollution, the requirements of large cities, intensive irrigation and a growing population with higher standards of living. Water resources flow through boundaries, accentuating the need for concerted international action to address these issues.

ISO’s portfolio of more than 19 500 International Standards includes at least 500 which directly or indirectly support the objectives of this year’s International Year on Water Cooperation. Our standards provide practical tools for developing a common understanding and cooperation between countries on aspects such as water quality and measurement, and the management of water supply services, including under crisis conditions.

The July/August 2013 ISO Focus+ issue takes a close look at today’s water-based issues and how standards are key to solving many of the challenges. It outlines ISO’s water solutions for good business practice, management of resources, risk assessment, metrics and infrastructure. It also looks at how ISO water standards can facilitate sustainable water management and increase water potential, helping to alleviate water scarcity and achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

Because of the important contribution that International Standards can make to addressing this vital and global challenge, water has become one of ISO’s strategic priorities. A recent ISO task force investigated areas where standardization could help and issued a set of recommendations for future work.

Our close cooperation with key partners in the water field ensures the relevance and market uptake of our standards. In addition, our multi-stakeholder approach consolidates contributions from industry, government, research, academia, international organizations and NGOs.

As we approach the half-way point in the International Year on Water Cooperation, the next issue of ISO Focus+ captures where the debate is now and sketches possible solutions for the next two decades. As part of this in-depth focus on water, Jean-Michel Herrewyn, CEO of Veolia Water, provides a unique insight into the world’s water problems and how International Standards can contribute.

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