



# Beat the Competition With Certification

**W**hether or not we'd like to admit it, we live in a competitive society. To make matters worse, I live in a competitive home.

*My children are motivated by the thrill of a contest. It is not just playing games either—the competition has moved to simple, everyday tasks.*

By Mark T. Unger

*Gain an advantage in the marketplace with third-party certification*

Who can clean his plate first? Who can get ready for bed fastest? Who can pick up the most toys in one minute? These are ways my wife and I use our kids' competitiveness to get things accomplished around the house. The bottom line is that competition surrounds us in everything we do and we are always looking for ways to get an edge. Put simply, we want to win.

If you are a manufacturer, supplier or dealer of drinking water treatment systems or components, you are in luck. There is a way to gain a competitive advantage in the marketplace and stand out from the rest: product certification.

## Evaluation Criteria

Product certification separates your products from others in the marketplace. Consumers, regulators and customers are assured that a certified drinking water treatment system or component is safe to use and performs as the product literature and packaging says it will. Your customers are comforted when your product has been evaluated by an independent third party to back your claims.

Each certified product is evaluated in the following key areas:

**Materials safety.** This ensures that the materials used to manufacture the product will not contribute contaminants to drinking water. Materials safety testing of complete systems and components ensures safe materials and processes are used.

**Chemical reduction performance.** This measures contaminant reduction capabilities over the life and/or capacity of the product. If consumers have a specific water treatment issue, chemical reduction testing can help in selecting a system that meets their contaminant, flow rate and capacity needs. Systems certified for health reduction claims (regulated metals, organics, cysts, turbidity, etc.) have safety factors built in to ensure the

systems provide safe water. Systems are either tested to 120% of their claimed capacity (if they have a performance indicator to inform the consumer when the filter is nearing the end of its life) or 200% of their claimed capacity (if no performance indicator is present).

**Structural integrity.** This ensures that products connected to a pressurized water supply will withstand at least 10 years of normal household use. Structural integrity testing evaluates the system or component against water hammer events (temporary pressure surges) and extended high-pressure events. The testing method exceeds the situations typically seen in the field, but it ensures that inadequately designed systems do not achieve certification.

**Product literature compliance.** This ensures that product packaging, installation manuals, data plates and product data sheets are consistent with test results, contain the information required by the applicable industry standard and do not make false or misleading reduction or performance claims. This helps consumers understand which standard the product is certified for and how it will perform against specific contaminants.

## Certification Standards

Drinking water treatment units and components can be evaluated using the following standards:

**Water filters.** NSF/ANSI 42 – Water filters making aesthetic (taste and odor) reduction claims and water filter components and NSF/ANSI 53 – Water filters making health reduction claims;

**Water softeners.** NSF/ANSI 44 – Residential water softeners and components;

**Reverse osmosis.** NSF/ANSI 58 – Residential reverse osmosis systems and components;

**Ultraviolet.** NSF/ANSI 55 – Residential UV systems and components;

**Distillers.** NSF/ANSI 58 – Residential distillation systems and components; and

**Shower filters.** NSF/ANSI 177 – Shower filtration systems.

## Certification Bodies

Once a product is evaluated and meets the requirements of the applicable industry standard, the product, product literature and packaging will be allowed to bear the certification mark of the certification body. A certification mark sets the product apart from non-certified products and gives consumers confidence when they purchase certified products. The certification mark is also an indicator for inspectors and regulators that a product meets industry standards. Each certification body maintains a listing of products certified through its program that consumers, regulators and inspectors can access to find a product.

Companies interested in obtaining product certification have several options to choose from when selecting a certification body. The Water Quality Assn., NSF Intl., Underwriters Laboratories and CSA Intl. each are accredited by the American National Standards Institute and the Standards Council of Canada for drinking water treatment units. Product certifications from each of these bodies are equivalent. Products are evaluated using the same standards and are held to the same requirements, but you may find that one certifier suits your needs better than others. Companies interested in product certification are encouraged to contact each certification body to determine which will provide them with the best product certification, regulatory acceptance, customer service and project costs.

When products and components are certified, we all benefit. *wqp*

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