



## How the BSI Kitemark™ has helped Britannia Fire develop innovative products and access new global markets

“As a British manufacturer in the export world, the BSI Kitemark is great. We have a quality product and the BSI Kitemark provides assurance of that. Export markets want high quality British products and the certification sets us apart.”

Andy Spence  
Sales Director, Britannia Fire

### Britannia Fire at a glance

Britannia Fire employs 37 staff, and has made portable and wheeled fire extinguishers since the 1970s. It exports worldwide through distributors in Europe, the Middle East, India and Malaysia.

The company maintains the highest standards with its management systems and products, including BSI certification to ISO 9001 for quality management and the BSI Kitemark, which it has held continuously for over 30 years, making it BSI's longest-standing Kitemark client for portable fire extinguishers. This instantly recognizable symbol of quality assurance has brought significant benefits to the company.

### The benefits of BSI Kitemark certification:

- Rigorous independent testing of products
- Assurance of product safety and reliability
- Brand credibility from the BSI Kitemark, a globally-recognized quality symbol
- Attracting new business in the UK and overseas
- Gaining access to new global markets
- Clear competitive advantage



## Customer background

As a member of the Fire Industry Association (FIA), Britannia Fire has long sat on technical committees and worked closely with BSI and other testing authorities to help establish robust industry standards for the quality, safety and reliability of fire protection and suppression products.

Product development has always been at the heart of the company, enabling it to keep pace with customer requirements through the latest production techniques. Andy Spence, Sales Director, explains, “As a British manufacturer you can’t compete on cost with cheap foreign imports, so you have to think outside the box to design better products.”

Mr Spence continues, “We developed a new type of fire extinguisher that will not corrode because the cylinder is made of high-density polyethylene (HDPE) instead of steel.”

He explains that the main reason to service a fire extinguisher is steel corrosion, so with the HDPE cylinder – together with foam created to last 10 years inside it without requiring discharge – users can greatly reduce servicing costs. “That is its USP,” he says.

As well as general fires, the new extinguisher is safe for direct use on electrical fires up to 1000 volts, meaning that in many fire risk areas only one type of extinguisher needs to be provided. This again reduces fire protection costs and, even more importantly, avoids potentially disastrous ‘decision paralysis’ among users who, when provided with two or more types of extinguisher to deal with different types of fire, have difficulty deciding which device they should use.

## Why the BSI Kitemark™?

The key challenge for Britannia Fire was to ensure that its innovative extinguisher would clear the necessary regulatory hurdles, which the BSI Kitemark to BS EN 3 has helped it to achieve.

The requirements of BS EN 3 meant that HDPE composition of the new extinguisher had to be extensively tested. “This was a challenge that was unique to our business because no one else had tried to apply the standard to a composite cylinder before,” says Mr Spence. “The servicing standard wasn’t created to cater

for new materials and technologies and didn’t allow for them.”

With BSI having been a reliable partner for three decades, the company had no hesitation in turning to it for support in achieving BSI Kitemark™ for Britannia’s new products. “BSI has always wanted to raise the bar for UK products and the BSI Kitemark was the way to do it. That’s why we’ve maintained it for 30 years,” says Mr Spence.

He adds, “BSI’s industry knowledge, technical expertise and client support are second to none – these were deciding factors in choosing them as our certification partner.”

## The certification journey

Testing is part of Britannia Fire’s DNA. For example, its product portfolio includes fire extinguishers that have achieved ‘MED’ approval and EN 1866 to be permitted for heavy-duty marine environments such as container ships and oil platforms. The company even has its own fire ground, so it can test the performance of new materials and technologies.

For its new HDPE fire extinguisher, the company’s first step was to carry out internal concept testing to prove that there was a clearly identified need in the market for such a product, and that the proposed extinguisher would have the desired characteristics. BSI then conducted further detailed independent product tests, including 1000-volt electrical fire tests at its specialist laboratory. All testing was successfully completed and BSI Kitemark certification was achieved in just three months.

“In terms of meeting the technical requirements of BS EN3, we knew what we had to achieve from our long experience with the standard,” says Mr Spence. “And we have an excellent longstanding relationship with BSI. We’re used to the way they work and they’ve always provided solid guidance on what we can and can’t do to achieve certification. For example, their expert feedback prompted us to ensure the cylinder would adhere to all regulations.”

Britannia Fire already had robust processes in place from achieving the BSI Kitemark for its steel extinguishers, so “there were no major surprises along the way,” says Mr Spence. “Our

people are the strength of our business and we benefitted from a high level of engagement among our staff. We also had complete buy-in from senior management – the directors were making the decisions, led by Roger Carr, our founder and Managing Director.”

## Benefits of certification

“As a British manufacturer in the export world, the BSI Kitemark is great,” says Mr Spence. “We have a quality product and certification provides assurance of that. It shows we have confidence in our products, gives us access to tenders and is a key selling point with customers.”

He continues, “We put a range of extinguishers through very rigorous testing by BSI, and rightly so. We want to know they work and they’re safe and we want to make sure customers are happy. The investment we’ve made is significant, but it’s a small price to pay, because the return on investment for our business has been far higher.

“Most of what we make, we export. Export markets want high quality British products and the BSI Kitemark sets us apart, helping us to expand into many different markets in Europe, the Middle East and Asia.”

Andy Spence concludes, “It’s a quality mark that gives us credibility in the eyes of customers all over the world – because the BSI brand has global credibility. It’s helping us to move forward with innovation, bring new ideas to the fire protection market and fly the flag for British manufacturers.”



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