

CASE STUDY

FloPlast



For FloPlast, the Kitemark® means good business

While many suppliers to the UK construction industry are suffering severely because of the recession, the present tough trading conditions have had almost no impact on the turnover and profitability of FloPlast, one of the UK's leading manufacturers of high-quality plastic building and plumbing products. Kitemark licenses, issued and administered by the British Standards Institution (BSI), have played a key role in allowing the company to achieve this exceptional and enviable resilience.

FloPlast, which was founded in 1991, has always been committed to supplying products that consistently meet the highest standards for quality. And, since it started working with BSI in 2005, it has found that Kitemark licenses have not only provided an excellent foundation for achieving this objective, but have also been invaluable in demonstrating and confirming the quality of the company's products to existing and potential customers.

The thoroughness of the evaluation process which precedes the granting of a Kitemark licence has proved a big benefit for FloPlast, since it not only looks at the quality of the product itself and confirms that it complies fully with all relevant standards, it also looks at the manufacturing methods used. This means that, in many cases, the BSI assessors are able to suggest simple changes that save money by, for example, enhancing efficiency or reducing waste.

The assessors are also increasingly focussing on sustainability, and can provide valuable guidance on minimising the environmental impact of manufacturing operations.

A further important feature of the Kitemark licensing process is that assessments are repeated periodically, usually at annual intervals. This means that any changes made by FloPlast are independently evaluated, and the company's customers can

be sure that the highest standards of product quality are consistently achieved and can always be relied upon.



FloPlast first became involved with BSI when it introduced a quality management system that BSI assessed and registered as meeting the requirements of BS EN ISO 9001:2001. Shortly thereafter, the company was granted Kitemark licences for its PVC-U rainwater drainage systems. These licenses cover gutters, gutter brackets, downpipes and fittings to BS EN 607, BS EN 1462 and BS EN 12200.

“We quickly found out how widely recognised and respected the Kitemark is, not just in the UK but also in overseas markets”

said Stuart Norris, Managing Director of FloPlast. “This is particularly true in areas like the Middle East where there has been a strong British influence in the past, but we've also found the Kitemark to be of great value in Europe and especially in France, where it has helped us to win a lot of business.”

As a result of its positive experiences with its initial Kitemark licences, the company subsequently applied for and successfully gained the first ever Kitemark licence to be granted for air admittance valves to BS EN 12380. These valves are a relatively new innovation, and simplify the installation of above-ground drainage systems, as well as reducing the amount of materials needed. >>>

Recently, FloPlast has invested in even more Kitemark licences, this time covering ABS and PVC-U plastic piping systems for soil and waste in internal applications, PVC-U plastic pipes for non-pressure underground applications, and PVC-U accessories and fittings to BS EN 1455, BS EN 1239, BS EN 1401, BS 4514 and BS 4660.

For FloPlast, its extensive portfolio of Kitemark licences is proving to be a valuable key to unlock new business, and thereby help the company to resist the effects of the recession. In particular, the FloPlast sales team is finding that even those specifiers who do not directly ask for Kitemarks are insisting on proof that products comply with all relevant standards.

“It’s no longer enough for suppliers just to claim that their products comply,” said Stuart Norris, “they now have to provide the proof. Of course, this proof could be provided on a standard-by-standard basis for each product, but that would involve a lot of paperwork and effort for both the supplier and the specifier.”

“A much better solution is simply to show a Kitemark licence for the product, which tells the specifier everything they need to know. Since this saves specifiers a lot of time, we find that they are very well disposed toward products covered by the licences, and this has helped us to gain a lot of valuable business.”

The success of this approach was amply demonstrated recently when FloPlast won a very large contract from one of the UK’s largest DIY retail chains. The contract covers the supply of FloPlast products to all of the chain’s outlets around the country, and Stuart Norris is confident that Kitemark licences were one of the most important factors in helping FloPlast to win it.

“During the negotiations for this contract, the licences meant that we could instantly demonstrate the quality of our products, and also our on-going corporate commitment to investing in quality, that, along with our demonstrable enthusiasm for innovation and service, gave us a big advantage over our competitors.”

FloPlast’s Kitemark licences have opened doors for the company throughout the UK and around the world and, while they have not enabled it to escape the effects of the recession entirely, they have ensured that it has remained in far better financial shape than almost any other company in the sector.

“Certainly, there’s some effort and some cost involved in obtaining Kitemark licences, but in our view, the time and money involved is an excellent investment that yields outstanding returns.”

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