



CB Scheme — What It Is and What It Is Not

A paradigm shift has happened in the product safety world recently, where the IECEE CB Scheme has wedged itself into a position above the agencies, where it is dictating the direction of product safety. For example, UL has abandoned its long standing inspection report to use one based on the CB Scheme, for better or worse.

What It Is!

- A Test Report that summarizes test results and constructional considerations in a way that one agency can “port” the information to another agency without needing to repeat everything from scratch.

- A good starting point for international certifications.
- An end-point for a very limited number of country certifications.
- An increasing burden on the compliance industries, due to the over-production of these test reports and their incessant updates.
- A point of conflict between member agencies, with each thinking the other members are doing things correctly, from the Reports’ particulars to the Scheme’s numerous rules.

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New UL Medical Standard is Published; see page 2.

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Agency Watch — UL is Making Changes

Some of these changes are for the better and are welcomed. These include...

- attempting to standardize interpretations among engineers so that the answer to a technical question does not vary with who you ask... or by office... or by the experience of the engineer.
- creating a customer service department, which can be helpful but sometimes acts as a buffer between you and who you want to really interact with.
- allowing clients to download their Reports from the web, using Client Document Access (CDA).
- improving their website to make it easier to navigate for those not familiar with UL-specific terminology.

Other changes include...

- increasing prices significantly above other agencies’ competitive marks, such as CSA’s or TUV Rheinland’s. We can only assume that, given the slower economy, this is UL’s attempt to keep revenues up.
- trimming down their workforce. Although a common practice for tech companies, UL only recently started this practice in significant numbers, (SEL’s founder was in fact laid off from UL in 1970, for wanting to help people pass the requirements rather than simply failing them.) It is safe to say that UL’s internal morale is low, and there is an environment where it seems no one wants to make a mistake or use independent engineering judgment. A design that is safe, but is in a gray area of the Standard is rarely being allowed because it not being obviously compliant with the letter of the law. Or that unnecessary tests are run simply for proce-

dural reasons rather than a real technical need for a safety concern.

Change can certainly be challenging, and we applaud UL for being willing to make changes. As with all change, there is an adjustment period - in this case resulting in more work per project. We expect this is a temporary situation, and one that UL must manage well.

Our concern is that by attempting to put all products into a predictable box for uniformity and efficiency reasons, it will reduce product creativity and innovation (or simply push clients to other agencies). Sometimes acceptance of a product’s meeting the spirit of the law using sound engineering judgment is equivalent to meeting the letter, and often a necessary option for compliance when the law (the Standard) is only written for known products of the day, not future ones.

Special points of interest:

- For agency visit dates to SEL and seminar dates, see www.SELdirect.com
- For info between newsletter issues, see our website or contact us directly.
- To see our larger facility where SEL has been since early 2002, see our website, which has directions.



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The CB Scheme (continued)

- An expensive “add-on” if not necessary, where Certificates go “end of life” in three years and the Standards are updated often enough to create frequent re-certification efforts.

What It Is Not!

- Any assurance that the products coming off the production line are built to the standards’ requirements.
- A requirement to comply with the European Union’s CE Mark requirements. It is one way, but not the most expedient way.
- An “end-all” one approval for everywhere. A perfect CB Test Report from a European lab, with all US National Deviations does not allow the product to be legally installed in the US! This misunderstanding allowed the Scheme to proliferate more quickly than it should have.

Our opinion is that if your company intends to ship internationally at some future date, make sure your power supply in particular has the correct CB Certification, and other critical components are properly certified. But maybe consider waiting until there is a need for the CB!

A slower economy has lead some to question the benefit of the CB Scheme. In many of the IECCE committees’ standards-development efforts, the US has one vote, the same as any other member, so we have less control of Standards’ development. The Standards are becoming revised at an unnecessarily hyper rate, while agencies struggle with how to apply the requirements.

For more information, clients can contact SEL for our complete Hand-out on this subject.

Compliance Tip!

If you are planning on doing the CB Scheme, for the reasons on page 1, make sure the power supply has a CB Test Report and Certificate, including all National Deviations that you need! Did you know that there are around 35 countries with such Deviations, with the US having the most?

UL Announces the Publication of UL 60601-1

UL has published a new version of its MEDICAL EQUIPMENT standard UL 60601-1 (April 2003). The new standard is a repackaging of UL 2601-1 and IEC 60601-1 with Amendments 1 and 2 integrated into the standard. The new standard brings the format closer into line with that of the IEC standard. Both standards will remain in effect until further notice.

SEL Handouts

For our clients, we offer 2-4 page summaries of those traditional problem areas, including:

- Plastics flammability
- Labeling
- Manuals
- Factory Inspections
- Standards Evolution
- Process Flowchart
- Spacings
- Why Do UL or Other NRTLs?
- CB Scheme
- CE Mark and the European Union

Did You Know?

UL is developing new requirements (and interpretations) for products with 48V battery inputs. Complying with these requirements is involved! SEL will include an update in the next SELdirect Dispatch.

SEL has an FTP site for clients to co-manage product submittals, track completed efforts, and download tools such as SEL Handouts, described at left.

There are 18 NRTLs qualified by OSHA to authorize application of Listing Marks, that typically satisfy local, state and federal requirements for electrical equipment.

SEL posts its agency visit schedule on:

www.SELdirect.com/calendar.htm