

Certification for geosynthetics: ASQUAL certification

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ABSTRACT: ASQUAL is certifying in geosynthetics area on the French market : geotextiles, geomembranes, application of geomembranes for welding and responsibility on site. This presentation gives a summary of these certifications.

The important development of ASQUAL certification in geosynthetics domain asks more and more frequent questions addressed to us, and gives us the opportunity to sum up this voluntary certification.

This certification was engaged in the middle of the 80ies by the French Committee for Geosynthetics (CFG) for geotextiles. It has been spread up after to geomembranes and to the application of geomembranes, always under CFG initiative.

Also, after having shortly remembered the context of the French certification, we will focus on the present situation for each sector.

1 THE FRENCH CERTIFICATION FOR PRODUCTS AND SERVICES.

France is, under our knowledge, the only country in the world having a so much precise law and regulation tool in certification for products and services.

On the basis of a law dated 1978 called "Scrivener law", the products certification was initially conceived to protect customer and consumer by researching a better transparency on objective information relating to performances of products. Technical Rules agreed by the Authorities have thus been elaborated with the participation of all the partners involved in a special category of products. (Today, their content is published in the Official Journal). Independant certifiers organisms have then been recognized for their impartiality and the competence of people involved in this process of certification.

ASQUAL has been a member among these organisms, with a competence initially considered in textile and an accreditation from Cofrac (French Committee for accreditation).

European standardization and French legislation have been confirmed and extended after to services.

2 GEOTEXTILES

In 1985, the partners interested in geotextiles have mobilized themselves to set up geotextile Technical Rules for certification, a very new position in our activity for geosynthetics. And ASQUAL - A non profit making Association – has been retained by CFG to carry out all the system for certification which was

revealed quite complex as far as the first certificates were issued only in about 1990.

And demand was so important that it became the basis of crystallization to create the French Association of Geotextiles Manufacturers (AFPG becoming AFPGA with related geotextile products).

Today, about one hundred geotextile products are certified, representing 80 to 90 % of the French Market.

And the international originality appears now with an evolution of criteria for certification based about totally on European Standards : thickness, mass per unit area, tensile resistance and elongation, static puncture, dynamic puncture, permittivity, opening size, waterflow capacity.

We must remind that this voluntary certification takes into account nominal values announced by the manufacturer and relative ranges of variation.

Application of CE marking induces now a reflection on the evolution of such a certification which will mobilize a future part of the activity of CFG (who, is now one of the Administrators of ASQUAL).

3 GEOMEMBRANES

Partners involved in this activity have considered that it was necessary to certify products and their applications simultaneously.

3.1 Products certification :

This certification was built up under a parallel way as that one carried out for geotextiles ; APRODEG (Association of Geomembranes Manufacturers) was created at the same time.

This explains why the Technical Rules relating to Geomembranes were set up quickly, on the basis of the experience previously acquired and on the fact that main customers or well known prescribers were very much interested in it.

Today, about thirty Geomembranes are certified in the main chemical classes : Bituminous, EPDM, HDPE, PP-F, PVC-P.

thickness, width, mass per unit area, static puncture, tensile strength.

The conventional waterproof level and raw materials used for composition of Geomembranes are also observed.

3.2 Certification of the application of geomembranes :

Appliers of geomembranes and their partners have elaborated two Technical Rules for certification of services in application of geomembranes taking into account their competences both at people level (welders and responsible of site), machines used and types of geomembranes taken into consideration. In such a way, a particular application is designating a person into a company with material means and management of the enterprise. Here also, appliers have created the French Association of Geomembrane Appliers (AFAG).

This process drawn towards the complete service has been very innovative and its success can be measured, through the results observed today : about 200 applications are certified by Asqual for welding and responsibility of site.

In the same way, as far as the two previous certifications, Europe is always present for setting up the practical rules, overtaking the lone competence of qualification from people to apply to the whole components of the enterprise.

And the partners continue to work in the same direction in order to build up a third document focusing on certification for the whole service "application of geomembranes" ensured by companies.

EXAMPLE

If one enforces to take some distance on the "certification phenomenum" in geosynthetics, we note that this movement sets a real demanding example.

Demanding first by the engagement of all the partners : manufacturers, appliers, main customers or prescribers, laboratories, auditors.

Demanding after by the very cooperative character given by everybody before individual interest at the meeting and on elaboration of rules for functioning.

Demanding also because of the needs coming from quality assurance involved in such a process : COFRAC accreditation for ASQUAL and testing laboratories, competence of auditors recognized by all the professional activity, trend towards enterprise certification for the companies having signed a contract with ASQUAL.

And, finally, as this opportunity is given here, ASQUAL wants to thank all these numerous actors (probably between 50 and 100) who show their confidence and demonstrate a huge assiduousness in attending the meetings organized for a good success of this ASQUAL certification..

