



# The Buyers Guide to Plumbing Products

*Understanding Regulatory Requirements*

Intertek  
70 Codman Hill Road, Boxborough, MA 01719  
[icenter@intertek.com](mailto:icenter@intertek.com) 800-WORLDFLAB [www.intertek.com](http://www.intertek.com)

## *Introduction*

*Before purchasing plumbing products to carry on your shelves it is crucial that you are able to determine if they have met applicable regulatory requirements. Ensuring that the appropriate product certification marks appear on these products will provide you with the assurance that these products have met these requirements.*

*This guide provides you with the tools, resources, and information necessary to gain a better understanding of the process and applicable product certification marks.*

### **How does product certification benefit retailers?**

Product certification provides a tangible measure of assurance to retailers and retail buyers that products they source meet applicable regulatory requirements.

### **Which products require a certification mark?**

Standards have been developed for, and are applicable to, virtually all products that pose compatibility, mechanical, or water damage hazards.

### **Is product certification mandatory?**

Within North America product testing is mandatory before market entry. However, the choice in testing partners to conduct the testing is up to the manufacturer. Here are a few facts about Intertek's WH Mark:

- The WH Mark is recognized by all Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJs) including retailers, building code officials, plumbing inspectors, fire marshals, and inspectors across North America;
- Intertek is recognized by the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) as an Accredited Certification Body;
- Intertek is accredited by the Standards Council of Canada as an accredited Testing Organization and Certification Body;
- The WH Mark is a recognized alternative to CSA, IAPMO, and UL marks for the US and Canada.

### **How does safety certification benefit buyers?**

While the system cannot guarantee that products certified are, in all instances "safe", it does provide a tangible measure of assurance for buyers and their customers that products meet applicable standards. Similarly, the safety certification system provides buyers with a gauge that can verify safety claims of suppliers.

The system also helps to protect both manufacturers and retailers from liability. By participating in the safety certification system, buyers and their suppliers automatically build documentation of attention to safety.

## What advantages does the WH Mark offer buyers?

- Sourcing products that bear the WH Mark can increase your range of product options. Because our mark appears on thousands of products in the North American market – you have a broader selection to consider.
- Our responsiveness in meeting the needs of manufacturers helps us to meet your needs too. Our fast service to your suppliers helps to get your purchases on the shelf and in your customer's hands on time.
- Our superior service can increase your supplier's efficiency, and in turn can reduce your costs.
- Our global presence allows us to work with your chosen suppliers – wherever they may be located – to obtain the safety credentials they need to meet market entry requirements and your own requirements.
- The WH Mark offers you and your company the necessary confidence that the products you purchase and sell have been safety tested and certified by one of the world's most qualified independent laboratories.

## Aren't manufacturers required to use CSA for their testing? Isn't this mandated by the standards themselves?

The simple answer to both questions is "no." In fact, this misconception has misled many manufacturers and retailers to believe they don't have a choice in their third-party testing partner. To satisfy the prerequisite of having products tested by an independent organization, the true legal requirement is that the testing laboratory must be an ANSI accredited Certification Body or an accredited Testing Organization and Certification Body by SCC; both of which Intertek is.

Examples:

- The Ontario Building Code (7.2.1.3[4]) states that "if a component of a plumbing system is required to be certified to a standard, the certification shall be made by a testing agency accredited for that purpose by the Standards Council of Canada."
- The National Plumbing Code of Canada (2.2.2.2) states that products "shall conform to CAN/CSA-XXX" standards not requiring a specific mark.

## Is there a difference between the WH and CSA Marks?

No. Both marks demonstrate that the product has met the minimum requirements of widely accepted product standards as determined through the independent testing. And, as part of that testing regimen, the product manufacturer has agreed to periodic follow-up inspections to verify continued compliance.

So, why would a manufacturer choose the WH Mark over the CSA Mark? The only real difference between the marks is in the service, and services, of the testing laboratory behind them. It's here that Intertek's clients enjoy the real differences between CSA and WH. Our custom-tailored testing, quick turnarounds, and flexible work methods are literally changing the face of the industry by promoting an environment where the testing lab and product manufacturer work more collaboratively - bringing products to market more quickly, more smoothly, and more cost-effectively than ever before.

## Is there a difference between the WH and IAPMO Marks?

No, as with CSA both marks demonstrate that the product has met the minimum requirements of widely accepted standards as determined through independent testing. As part of that testing regimen, the manufacturer has agreed to periodic follow-up inspections to verify continued compliance. The one difference IAPMO does make with the certification of their product is they state it also complies with the Uniform Plumbing Code (UPC). In most cases this is exactly the same as compliance to the test standard but it can carry more weight with IAPMO inspectors. Intertek can conduct the necessary testing to determine product compliance to both standards and the UPC. For certain products this can be a great advantage since not all products can meet the more restrictive requirements of the UPC and obtain IAPMO certification even though they meet the requirements of the IPC.

## Who looks for certification marks?

Research has shown that the certification mark on a product rarely is included in consumers buying criteria. Rather, their decision is based mainly on the brand and price.

However, a variety of people and/or organizations expect to see certification marks on plumbing products. This includes architects, city code officials, AHJ's and plumbing inspectors. Given that jurisdictional authority expectations and requirements vary from city to city and region to region, a nationally recognized certification mark is beneficial to manufacturers throughout North America.

## What does a certification mark tell me?

Certification marks such as WH, UPC, and CSA signify that the product has been tested to, and found to comply with, national standards by a qualified, independent testing laboratory. The presence of a certification mark also means the product is listed in the directory of the laboratory that verified the product's compliance and is part of an on-going follow-up program that ensures the products continued compliance during manufacturing.

**The WH Mark** - A product bearing the WH Mark with the "us" identifier at the 4 o'clock position has been tested and deemed compliant to U.S. product safety standards only. A WH Mark with a "c" identifier at the 8 o'clock position means the product bearing it complies with Canadian product safety standards only. And a WH Mark with both "us" and "c" identifiers at the 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock positions respectively, signifies that the product bearing the mark complies with both U.S. and Canadian product safety standards.



## Who sets the standards?

The standards themselves are developed through a consensus process that takes into account the viewpoints of manufacturers, the insurance industry, private organizations and the general public. The standards are then sponsored by non-government organizations such as the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), ASTM and CSA.

## What are examples of North American certification marks commonly found on plumbing products?

Within North America, product certification marks follow the same identifying convention. A product bearing a mark with the "us" identifier at the 4 o'clock position has been tested and deemed compliant to U.S. standards only. A mark with a "c" identifier at the 8 o'clock position means the product bearing it complies with Canadian standards only. And a mark with both "us" and "c" identifiers at the 4 o'clock and 8 o'clock positions respectively, signifies that the product bearing the mark complies with both U.S. and Canadian standards. When a mark appears with no identifiers this also means the product bearing the mark complies with both U.S. and Canadian standards.

Among the North American certification marks commonly found on plumbing products are the following, provided by the following testing and certification organizations:

### *The WH Mark provided by Intertek*



### *The UL Listed Mark provided by Underwriters Laboratories*



### *The CSA Listed Mark provided by CSA International*



### *The UPC Mark provided by IAPMO*



## About Intertek

Intertek does more than simply help our clients comply, we give them the competitive advantage they desire. Our Building Products solutions offer comprehensive services including, product testing and analysis, certification and corporate education appropriate for all types and levels of business. Intertek is a leader in global compliance, technology services and product stewardship.

Intertek is more than a testing laboratory; we guide our clients through the "Built Environment," helping them identify all the regulatory certifications they need for the environments where their products will be used. This reduces costs and ultimately accelerates time to market.

We provide quality and safety solutions to a wide range of industries, through a network of 24,000 people in 1000 laboratories and offices in 100 countries around the world. Through our global network of labs, Intertek can test and certify your products to meet British, European and North American codes and standards, including ANSI, ASTM, CSA, EPA, ICBO, UL, and ULC. We offer manufacturers access to some of the most recognized safety certifications in the world. Our WH (Warnock Hersey) Mark for building products is recognized among industry leading manufacturers and code officials across North America and around the world. Our ETL Mark for electrical/electronic products is the fastest growing safety certification mark in North America, widely accepted by AHJs and building code officials.

## The next step

Call or e-mail Intertek to get expert advice on and learn more about Building Products testing and certification:

- Phone: 1 800 WORLDLAB
- Email: [icenter@intertek.com](mailto:icenter@intertek.com)
- Web: [www.intertek.com](http://www.intertek.com)

*This publication is copyright Intertek and may not be reproduced or transmitted in any form in whole or in part without the prior written permission of Intertek. While due care has been taken during the preparation of this document, Intertek cannot be held responsible for the accuracy of the information herein or for any consequence arising from it. Clients are encouraged to seek Intertek's current advice on their specific needs before acting upon any of the content.*