

How do you recognise correctly certified PPE?



Is your PPE correctly CE Certified? How do you know?

There are many products used around the world that appear to be CE certified **and yet are not.**

Can you tell the difference?

By law PPE must be CE certified if it is to be sold in Europe. The usual route is to have the product certified to a relevant EN product performance standard.

European standards are in place for a wide range of PPE from protective clothing against chemicals, heat and flames, to head protective helmets, eye protection, gloves and safety footwear.

Increasingly, regions outside Europe are turning to CE certification to ensure PPE is up to standard, because the benefits of using PPE that is CE certified are clear.



Produced in association with the British Safety Industry Federation. Working to ensure that PPE is legal and performs as it should.

If your product is certified to an EN standard it means that:

- A product meets **minimum** performance specifications defined in legally recognised standards applied throughout Europe.
- A product has been subjected to a series of tests on physical characteristics, (for example for fabrics, abrasion resistance, tear strength, puncture and anti-static properties etc.), and finished product performance according to application or protective type.
- In the case of Category III or 'Complex' products (i.e. PPE designed to protect against risks that may cause very serious consequences or irreversible damage to health), a product has been assessed and certified and its manufacturing unit assessed for quality control procedures by an independent, European-government appointed Notified Body.

Thus, following a risk assessment, where one or more items of PPE have been chosen as a control measure, confirming that the PPE is CE certified is an essential starting point in assessing its suitability for a task in terms of ensuring it meets minimum performance requirements and will do the job of protection claimed by the manufacturer.

The problem is... how do you know that a garment is correctly CE certified or not?

Actually it's quite simple... we explain overleaf.

How can you be sure your PPE is properly EN Certified?

All EN certified product should feature a label with everything you need.

The information on the label is very specific and a legal requirement. Each product type, whether protective gloves, boots or shoes, head gear, hearing or eye protective products, has its own specific labelling or marking requirements. For category III PPE, labels are approved by the Notified Body as part of the audit process. For example, labeling for Category III protective clothing requires all of the following details:

PPE Category
Indicates the PPE is Category I, II or III (i.e., Simple, Intermediate, or Complex Design)

Size
Indication of size and wearer dimensions according to PPE type.

Type Approvals
The approved 'type' pictograms according to protection type and applications. The standard number and date **MUST** be included.

CE Mark and Notified Body Number
For Category III products, this is the most important part. *See below.*

General Information Pictograms
• general protection type (in this case chemical protection)
• single-use or re-usable
• reference to User Information sheet
• any required care pictograms

Product Identification
Specific identification of the item code or part number, year and place of manufacture.

Note:
The new PPE regulation will require a manufacturers' Declaration of Conformity to be available with each item of PPE. New Lakeland garments will feature a QR code link to a web page where these documents can be downloaded.



Note: The example above is a label for Lakeland protective clothing. Other PPE Types have different specific requirements. But all Category III PPE **MUST** feature a CE Mark and Notified Body Number reference.

Category III or 'Complex' products are items of PPE that are designed to be worn or held to protect against a workplace hazard that may cause serious or irreversible damage to health. Such products must be certified using a process involving audit and approval by an independent Notified Body. Category III PPE **MUST** feature a CE Mark and Notified Body Number reference.

For Category III garments, all the information above is legally required on the label. However, two specific items clearly indicate whether the PPE is certified or not: *The CE mark and Notified Body Number.*

The CE Mark



'CE' stands for **Conformité Européene**. This mark is very specific and is a legal requirement to indicate the item is CE certified. If it is not present it is not certified.

The Notified Body Number

0321

This is the specific number of the Notified Body that has conducted the PPE and/or QA system audit, certified the product, ensured it meets the requirements of applicable standards and issued the official CE certificate.

If the label on your Category III PPE does NOT feature the two items above, then it is NOT CE certified (even though it may display the type pictograms and other information detailed above.)

Why is this important?

If this information is not present it means that:-

- The product is not compliant (despite what other information on the label and/or packaging might imply)
- The product probably has not been subjected to any of the tests required by the relevant standard.
- You have absolutely no way of knowing if the product meets any performance standards at all. It may achieve a much lower standard of protection than you think.

If the CE mark and Notified Body number are not present, the PPE is not compliant and may not meet any performance standards at all. Without these other information on the label is worthless and simply an empty claim by the manufacturer.

What is a Notified Body?

A Notified Body is an organisation appointed by EU member governments and authorised to conduct audits of products and manufacturing facilities and thereby certify and issue CE certificates against them.

There are several Notified Bodies in each country, and each is identified by a specific four digit code. Note that Notified Bodies can certify only specific products as authorised, they cannot certify any product.

A list of authorised notified bodies organised by type, country, number etc is available on the EU "NANDO" website at the address below - or use the QR code to link directly.

<http://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/nando/index.cfm>



Example of Non CE-Certified product



Here is an example of a label from a protective clothing item found in India that appears to be - but is NOT certified.

Note: it includes the CE style pictograms and size diagrams but no standard numbers or dates and most importantly features no CE mark or Notified Body Number.

This item of PPE is not CE certified.

You have no way of knowing if this item of PPE has been tested to any EN standards or has been certified by a notified body.

What should I do if I come across product like this?

- Contact the manufacturer and request a copy of the EN certificate and Declaration of conformity for the product.
- Send it to us at Lakeland and we will research it for you.

CE certification can be a valuable part of a robust risk assessment. But for it to be useful you need to ensure your PPE is genuinely certified - wherever in the world you are. Otherwise you might be putting people in danger!