

What can you do to help?

Paul Dawson, commercial director at Niglon, is calling on all contractors to start having frank conversations about certification with their wholesalers, suppliers and even their customers in order to prevent manufacturers from shying away from testing responsibilities

Installing safe and reliable products is the core focus of contractors everywhere, and yet there are a growing number of uncertified products on the market – something one family-run electrical supply firm is speaking out against. It's only by talking openly and often about certification that we will see a reduction in the number of products on the market which have not been properly tested.

We know, especially in the wake of the Grenfell disaster, safety is at the forefront of installers' minds – but sadly, assuming that a product has been independently certified could be a dangerous game.

Nobody wants an electrical item to fail, and if it does the hope would be that it simply causes a minor inconvenience and cost to replace the product; but we all know at the more serious end of the scale. Electrical item failure can cause extensive damage to properties, and more importantly, people could be injured or killed.

We have a stark reminder of these catastrophic consequences of electrical item failure in the form of the Grenfell disaster, the source of which was traced back to a faulty product (although other factors exacerbated the extent of the damage and loss of life caused). But four years on, we are seeing a rise in the number of products which haven't been tested, which are ultimately ending up in buildings where people work, live and visit. This is the exact opposite of what should be happening in the industry, and that's why at Niglon we have been highlighting the problems in the hope that we can trigger these all-important conversations.

As well as comprehensive testing by an independent third-party for all surge and circuit protection devices, my team and I believe it should be routine for proof of certification to be requested by contractors whenever they are sourcing a new item.

Ultimately, if contractors – alongside wholesalers and suppliers – are constantly asking for certification proof, then it will be very difficult for unscrupulous manufacturers to continue selling products that don't meet or exceed the expected standards. Given that contractors are having day-to-day contact with the end users who live and work where these products will be installed, it's also really important to consider raising the conversation of testing with those customers.



If the demand for properly certified products is coming from every single group within the supply chain (end users, installers, wholesalers and suppliers), then it is going to be incredibly difficult for manufacturers to shy away from the need for proper and visible certification.

While competition between businesses is natural in any industry, I believe there are times when this should be put aside – and ensuring no harm comes to customers is definitely one of those times. Sometimes this can mean opting not to supply, stock, or fit the cheapest option available – but again, when it comes to protecting life, cost should absolutely be a secondary factor.

We recently had a situation where we had the opportunity to practise what we are preaching, when we were sourcing new surge protection devices. There were multiple options, some of which were cheaper products than the European manufacturer we decided to go with, simply because we knew they were able to prove their products were certified. Of course, certification is especially important for surge protection devices because of the limited ability contractors have to be able to test them once they are installed in a home or workplace, so partnering with



a firm which tested its products was the only viable option in our eyes.

We have no way of knowing which untested products will fail and when, or how much damage will be caused when they do. So, let's not wait any longer, let's implement proper testing and more transparency for everyone now.