



P R E S S R E L E A S E

UK LAGS EUROPE IN SAFETY OF ABRASIVES

The UK is falling behind other major European countries when it comes to the safety of abrasive products, such as grinding wheels, cut-off discs and coated abrasives, used throughout industry in manufacturing, construction and general engineering. So claims the Organisation for the Safety of Abrasives (oSa), a not-for-profit association of 37 manufacturers that account for 70 per cent of the world's production of hand-held abrasives.

In France, it is acknowledged that oSa-labelled rough grinding wheels, cutting wheels and diamond cutters for hand-held operations conform to the requirements of the French decree on the safety of use of abrasive products. All outlets, even DIY stores, are checked to ensure that the abrasives they sell are correctly marked. Failure to comply carries an on-the-spot fine of €1,500.

Similarly in Germany and Italy, it is strongly recommended that abrasive products conform to the relevant EN standards. This steers consumers

immediately to oSa members, all of which guarantee that their products meet or exceed the highest worldwide safety standards, including those of the Comité Européen de Normalisation, the European standards body that issues EN standards, and of ANSI in the USA.

In the UK, although the Health and Safety Executive recognises EN standards, there are few restrictions on the sale of unsafe abrasives and no statutory obligation to use the oSa logo, or any other marque, to indicate that the product will be safe in operation provided that it is used correctly. Every manufacturer and supplier claims that its products are safe, but experienced users know, often to their cost, that this is not the case. Abrasive wheels can disintegrate in use and segments on diamond blades can fail and fly off. At peripheral speeds approaching those of Formula One cars, such accidents can and have maimed and even killed.

oSa's methodical and exhaustive tests are performed by recognised, independent test institutes. The organisation confirms that its members' products are safe to use by means of its own certification procedure which ensures that factories work to a formal quality management system, that the manufacturing facilities have been inspected and that, crucially, regular monitoring of production processes and product safety is carried out.

In this way, manufacturers represented by the organisation commit themselves to taking all necessary measures to guarantee the highest level of operational safety for their products.

Anyone thinking that this is just another club and that such an organisation might lack 'teeth' may be reassured to know that 50 per cent of new members fail to meet oSa's stringent rules on their first attempt; and that funding has been reserved to litigate vigorously in cases of illegal use of the oSa logo anywhere in the world.

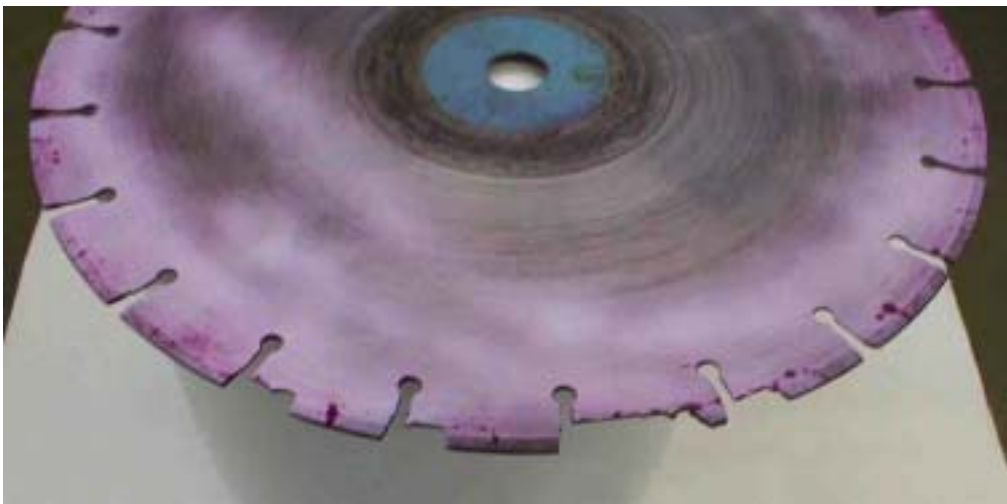
oSa President, Markus Fischbacher, commented, "Safety in the workplace is paramount and with the range of abrasive products varying from tools for professionals to those for the DIY market, the potential for quality variation is enormous.

"Whatever the product, our aim is to make oSa the universally recognised symbol of safety and end the selection lottery when purchasing abrasives. Our logo on a product means that the abrasive is traceable to a manufacturer that accepts responsibility for its safety, and that it is guaranteed to be made to the highest standards."

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Members of oSa commit to taking all necessary measures to guarantee the highest operational safety of their products.



Faulty abrasive products like this can cause serious injury and even death.