

# Turning the wheel against product piracy



At Practical World the Organisation for Safety of Abrasives, which has a recognised safety symbol (oSa®) in the abrasive materials sector, highlighted the issues of product piracy and the effect they are having on user safety. Will Lowry reports on the oSa® presentation.

The oSa® was founded in 2000 by 15 European manufacturers concerned with promoting safety in abrasives. Now there are 45 members from countries around the world including Germany, Spain, Italy, France, China, Korea, Israel, Turkey, Hungary and South Africa, supplying approximately 70% of the world wide market with abrasive hand tools.

"Leading producers of high grade abrasive products came together in this international organisation to document the high safety standards of their branded and quality products", explains Pierre Balian, president of oSa. "The sole purpose was to ensure that the quality of their products remains consistently high in the interests of abrasive product users."



Pierre Balian, president of oSa

By becoming a member of the oSa companies are entitled to place the oSa symbol on their abrasive products, which allows the user to know the products are produced in compliance with the European safety standards for abrasives. The safety standards define specific requirements for abrasive products and describe the test methods by which these requirements can be obtained. The three safety standards which are relevant to abrasives are EN12413, Safety requirements for bonded abrasive products, EN13236, Safety requirements for superabrasives and EN13743, Safety requirements for coated abrasives.

At the press meeting Pierre Balian explained the process that companies have to go through before they can become a member of the oSa. "Membership is open to all companies whose

products meet or surpass the CEN standards of safety requirements for abrasive products, which through stipulated testing procedures and conditions ensure that these standards are also maintained, and which accept the inspections laid down by oSa. Fulfilment of these requirements gives members the right to mark their products with the oSa label."

Pierre went on to explain that when companies apply for membership it is the whole manufacturing procedure that is audited not just the product. "Each company has to carry out the production accompanying inspections themselves, as ultimately every delivered product has to be as safe as possible. The oSa monitors this with independent on-site inspections. First the applicant sends a large number of test samples to an independent test institute. Then during the actual audit, a further intensive inspection is carried out. Finally, subsequent audits can also be ordered at any time if there is any reason for complaints."

By becoming a member of the oSa companies are highlighting the high standards that they adhere to, to make sure that their products are of the highest quality. Unfortunately counterfeit abrasive products with oSa marking have entered the market, even though the product and manufacturer don't meet the requirements for membership.

"The majority of these counterfeit products are coming from China", explains Dr Klaus Werner, secretary general. "Due to this problem we have launched our "Against Product Piracy" campaign, in which we want to communicate directly with the industry and trade, with the central message being that original technology with an oSa audit pays because it protects users' health. The biggest asset we have is the value and reputation of our brand and these counterfeit copies are affecting this."

To try and combat the problem the oSa appointed Pinkerton Consulting Services (Shanghai) Ltd to investigate the counterfeits and find out which distributors are getting companies to

produce the counterfeits.

Pinkerton, a subsidiary of Securitas, has four offices, in Honk Kong, Shanghai, Guangzhou and Beijing. Willo Lai, manager in charge of Pinkerton, explained how it approached the problem of finding and exposing the counterfeiters. "We started working with oSa in July 2007 and conducted a three-month market survey in various

regions of China and found a number of Chinese manufacturers producing copies which were being sold around the world."

**"The biggest asset we have is the value and reputation of our brand and these counterfeit copies are affecting us."**

*copies are affecting us" of our brand and these counterfeit is the value and reputation "The biggest asset we have*

Pinkerton discovered that not only were the counterfeiters using the oSa trademark but were also using the company trademarks of the various members of the oSa. This led to the oSa and its members acting as a group when taking action against the counterfeiters, rather than individual companies.

"Counterfeits and product imitations frequently fail to observe fundamental requirements for device and product safety," says Klaus. "Users who purchase and employ copied or fake products are therefore potentially exposed not only to financial losses but also, in some cases, to a high risk of accidents and injury due to the counterfeit abrasive discs/wheels disintegrating whilst in use."

The oSa plans to continue its 'Against Product Piracy' campaign and its registration in China, which it hopes to have by the end of 2008, will help it with its aim to stop the counterfeiters.

