Helping smaller countries protect their populations from danger in explosive environments

New UNECE publication offers regulatory framework and endorses IECEx System

Geneva, Switzerland, 2011-03-22 – *The IEC is proud to announce that United Nations via UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) has just issued a publication that helps address the hazards in environments with a high risk of explosion such as mines, refineries, chemical plants and mills.*

The booklet, *A Common Regulatory Framework for Equipment Used in Environments with an Explosive Atmosphere,* can be used by countries that lack regulation in this sector as a blueprint for their legislation, and also for aligning existing national regulations with internationally harmonized best practice.

"Ex-equipment" for use in such hazardous environments needs to be specially designed, installed, maintained and repaired to eliminate potential sparks and open flames. This heterogeneous sector plays an important part in many areas of economic activity, and represents an important component of international trade.

This equipment therefore undergoes severe testing and certification, which is very costly. Because differing legislation often does not allow countries to accept the testing and certification done in another country, manufacturers generally must have devices re-tested and re-certified whenever they want to enter a new market. For some companies, this investment simply may not be worthwhile for entering the smaller markets. Without certification, state-of-the art equipment will remain unavailable; which means reduced safety levels both for local industry and for the populations that live around the sites that harbour potential explosion risks.

Therefore, up until now, because of the lack of harmonized legislation for equipment for use in hazardous areas, countries that have not represented a sufficient market opportunity have not been able to access state-of-the-art equipment for use in explosive environments.

The UNECE common regulatory framework is based on and encompasses international best practice and international standards, and in particular standards from IEC TC (Technical Committee) 31. It also formally endorses the IECEx (the IEC System for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres) as the recommended global best practice model for verifying conformity to international standards.

Uwe Klausmeyer of Germany, winner of the prestigious IEC Lord Kelvin Award for his exceptional work in the field of standardization said that, "the UNECE framework regulation builds on the positive experience of multilateral schemes for assessing conformity to standards, such as the IECEx. Under these schemes, testing and certification are carried out through agreed procedures and by peer assessment. These systems are transparent, fully democratic and self-financing."

Mutual recognition – broad acceptance

Members of the IECEx Certification System mutually recognize certificates and associated testing/assessment by other members of the System. Due to its broad global acceptance and recognition, this System helps eliminate duplicate testing and reduces assessment costs.

It also forms a clear basis for risk management and promotes free trade in Ex equipment and services, considerably reducing cost.

The System follows a "life cycle" approach, which covers installation, production, verification, inspection, maintenance and repair. It also provides a single international system to assess and certify the competence of personnel carrying out work or repairs in highly specialized industries where a risk of fire or explosion exists.

A copy of this new UNECE Publication may be obtained from:
http://www.iecex.com/docs/UNECE_CRO_en.pdf
or directly from the UNECE at:
http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/SectoralInitiatives/EquipmentForExplosiveEnvironment/SIEEE_CRO.pdf

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About the UNECE WP.6

The UNECE Working Party on Regulatory Cooperation and Standardization Policies promotes regulatory cooperation in a wide number of sectors. For an overview, please see: http://www.unece.org/trade/wp6/AreasOfWork/RegulatoryCooperation/RegulatoryCooperation-Brochure.pdf

About the IEC

The IEC is the world's leading organization that prepares and publishes International Standards for all electrical, electronic and related technologies – collectively known as "electrotechnology". It brings together 162 countries and close to 10 000 experts worldwide.

IEC International Standards include globally relevant specifications and metrics that allow electric or electronic devices to work efficiently and safely with each other anywhere in the world. IEC work covers a vast range of technologies from power generation, transmission and distribution to home appliances and office equipment, semiconductors, fibre optics, batteries, nanotechnology and renewable energy. IEC also manages Conformity Assessment Systems that certify that equipment, systems or components conform to its international standards. www.iec.ch

About IECEx

The IEC System for Certification to Standards relating to Equipment for use in Explosive Atmospheres is the internationally accepted certification system that covers the installation, production, verification, inspection, maintenance and repair of equipment and systems used in areas where the risk of fire and/or explosions due to flammable gases, liquids and dusts exists (Ex industries). It also allows for the assessment of the competency of personnel carrying out work such as repairs in these industries. IECEx covers the broad spectrum of devices, systems and services used in explosive environments, and verify their conformity to International Standards such as those prepared by IEC Technical Committee 31. Typical examples include interrupters, lamps, communication equipment and all kinds of instrumentation and rotating machines.
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