



CONSOLIDATED AND SPEEDY PLASTIC PIPE CERTIFICATION



REHAU is a leading provider of innovative polymer-based solutions for construction, automotive and industry applications. The global company combines strong capabilities in materials development and manufacturing with a passion for the unlimited potential of polymers. REHAU recently consolidated its product certifications to one certifier, NSF International, and turned to NSF when launching a new line of more than 140 certified plumbing products in North America.

THE CHALLENGE

REHAU has had NSF International certifications for its piping products since the early 1990s. Certification was required by city, county and state jurisdictional codes and for having authorities recognize the product. Recently, REHAU decided to consolidate certifications for all its products under one certifier.

“REHAU launched an initiative to streamline certifications and optimize budget,” says Jonathan Bittenbender, Director of Engineering with REHAU’s Building Solutions Division. “We had been dealing with four or five certification agencies that were overlapping services, and needed to decide where we would have the most benefit while reducing costs of testing and auditing. We also wanted to deal with one organization, instead of managing multiple ones.”

With over 170 locations on six continents, REHAU also required a certifier with a global presence.

SOLUTION

REHAU chose NSF International as its primary certifier. Bittenbender says, “The NSF certification process is very transparent and easy to navigate, and has very competitive pricing. As our relationship evolved, we were able to consolidate more certifications and we expanded certifying options. We were able to shorten time to certification and streamline processes. Other certifiers made less sense over time, and NSF has done a great job meeting our requirements.”



EVERLOC+™ range: Polymer and lead-free brass fittings and PEXa compression sleeves in diameters up to 2 inches

“One of the key aspects of interacting with NSF is you have a personal representative; a single point of contact,” says Dave Nickelson, Technical Team Leader with REHAU’s Building Solutions Division. “I can ask our account manager any question I have. Having one key point for quoting and navigating new certifications makes it much easier. Some competitors have gone to online quoting systems, where you never know who is going to pick up your file. Our NSF account manager is familiar with our certifications and how to get other products added to our listings.”

While the single point of contact simplifies interactions, additional NSF staff is available for REHAU. “The relationship goes deeper than just our account manager. We also speak with NSF’s general manager for plastic piping and its engineering lab manager, who are also accessible and understand the listings and certifications,” says Bittenbender. “NSF has done



a good job in making sure its organization is in touch with customers and accessible to us. Our account manager is our 'window' into NSF, but the whole team is accessible."

NSF is also able to save REHAU time. "We've experienced great turnaround times for completing new product listings," says Bittenbender. "We requested a new fitting, in a line of already listed products, to be certified on a Wednesday and it was certified by Friday! Of course, not all certifications can be that speedy, but NSF's response time in terms of answering questions and generating a quote is significantly faster than many of its competitors. In fact, we've found it's a much better use of our time working with NSF than some other major certifiers, because we know NSF is working on our issues and will get back to us, as opposed to us having to spend time on follow-up. The customer service has really made NSF stand out and was a major factor in REHAU bringing more of our certification business to NSF."

Nickelson adds, "Our listing for ASTM E84 (for surface burning characteristics of building materials) was held by another agency that was doing separate audits, so moving it to NSF who was at our plant already doing auditing for a similar standard, CAN/ULC S102.2, made the process more efficient."

NSF clients also have access to certification and audit status through an online portal. "NSF Connect provides full transparency to all our activities," says Nickelson. "We can easily track the status of our product testing, from the point of shipping throughout the whole process, and we see estimated completion times. Similarly, we can easily access audit scheduling and results, including seeing and addressing any corrective actions. We can immediately see all our data in real time, which helps us do our jobs better."

RESULTS

REHAU now has over 500 product certifications through NSF International, primarily to NSF/ANSI 14: *Plastics Piping System Components and Related Materials*, including ASTM F877 and CSA B137.5 for crosslinked

polyethylene, which is required by all major plumbing codes. Other certifications include NSF/ANSI 61: *Drinking Water System Components - Health Effects*, NSF/ANSI 372: *Drinking Water System Components - Lead Content* and NSF/ANSI 51: *Food Equipment Materials*.

REHAU recently launched the EVERLOC+™ compression-sleeve fitting system for plumbing. Designed for use with REHAU RAUPEX® UV shield PEXa pipe in potable water applications, EVERLOC+ has both polymer and lead-free brass fittings in diameters up to 2 inches.

"Having the NSF relationship really helped with the launch of EVERLOC+," says Bittenbender. "Normally when introducing a new product to industry, one of the initial questions and concerns is whether it meets plumbing and mechanical code requirements, and people look for third-party credibility of systems. Having all the NSF certifications in place demonstrated compliance and essentially allowed immediate acceptance."

In addition, the timeline for getting products certified is usually the driving factor for the launch date of a new market introduction, but this wasn't the case with EVERLOC+. "NSF's speed of service was phenomenal. The process of certifying 147 new products produced at four facilities – from quoting and sample submission to testing and auditing – took four months." Each of the products was certified to one or more of five standards.

NSF was also able to provide certification for metric-sized piping for radiant floor heating applications through a special engineered specification, NSF SE 1091. NSF creates these specifications to address products similar to, but not specified in, other standards. Based on size, REHAU's metric piping didn't dimensionally fit the ASTM standard, but SE 1091 allowed testing and verification to all other ASTM requirements.

NSF certification also helps REHAU in its marketing efforts through use of the NSF mark on pipes, box labels, catalogs and marketing literature.

Logo and photo courtesy of REHAU