



GN GUIDELINES

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Conforming building products

For the past few years, non-conforming building products have been the talk of our national media after a series of significant failures, including the Infinity cable failures and product recall, and the fire at Lacrosse Docklands in Melbourne in November 2014.

The multi-residential building complex had a fire started by a cigarette on a balcony that engulfed 13 floors in 15 minutes. The Alucobest aluminium composite cladding used on the building was imported from China and did not meet the combustibility requirements for this use. This failure led to class action lawsuits being raised against the developer to rectify this material to a better suited material.

Closer to home for us in the residential timber building industry, there is now a wide range of building products, such as hoop iron strapping, with numerous generic versions available. In the past I have tried to search for product certifications and technical brochures for generic products, but in most cases they don't exist.

Products like this rely on gullible customers assuming that, just because it looks like a strip of 30x0.8mm galvanised steel, it will automatically meet AS1684 requirements. But how can a consumer determine if a product has the right amount of zinc coating not to rust prematurely, or the minimum steel grade to guarantee its strength when a cyclonic storm hits? How can the purchaser be sure a product complies with the standards underneath its superficial appearance? And finally, what determines if a product is conforming?

The NCC 2015 Building Code of Australia Volume Two Part 1.2.2 lists some of the

types of evidence necessary to support the *Performance Requirement or Deemed to Satisfy Provision*. These requirement may be one or a combination of the following:

- A test report from a registered testing authority. The most common and well-known reports are provided by laboratories and test equipment certified under the National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia.
- A current Certificate of Conformity issued under the ABCB scheme for product certification, or certificate of accreditation issued by a state or territory accreditation authority, such as CodeMark and WaterMark. Products certified under these schemes have legislated product acceptance by building control authorities.

- A certificate from a suitable registered professional engineer describing the product specifications and characteristics, and on what Australian Standards or codes of practice the design information has been based upon.
- A current certificate issued by a product certification body that has been accredited by the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand.
- Any other form of documentary evidence that accurately describes the design properties and performance of the product, and adequately demonstrates its suitability for use in building.

By contrast with generic products that have limited documentation and could be non-conforming, reliable Engineered Building Products have these general characteristics:

- The product is clearly identifiable and well labelled with the brand name and product name, as shown in the photo examples.
- The product has comprehensive specifications which are easily accessible in printed hard copies, online soft copies, and/or phone apps.
- The producer has credentials as a well-known and reliable Australian based company.
- The product is supported by a product certificate from a registered professional engineer.

In short, the next time you specify or order a building product, do yourself a favour and make sure you're not getting a generic lemon but a genuine engineered building product that complies with the Building Code of Australia. **T**



Above: a clearly identifiable compliant strap;
below: a non-compliant strap



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