

Testing to International Standards...

As companies prepare to update their production facility, they are often interested in assuring that the facility is prepared to produce goods for the international market as well as the North American market. In a number of cases we find that they are not aware of the special testing requirements imposed by the European agencies. We have been able to assist a number of companies by reviewing their applications and offering guidance on how to meet the requirements.

Some examples include:

- Sotcher Measurement worked with the **Whirlpool Corporation** in setting up test stations for their Kitchenaid products that allowed them to intermix products for the world market with the products for domestic distribution. To meet Whirlpool's high quality standards, audit test stations were built, giving them statistical information for their process control.
- **The Insinkerator Co.** is modernizing their production line. Sotcher Measurement was able to assist them in finding a practical means of assuring the quality of products designed for both 120 and 240 volts, while meeting all the international testing standards.
- **The Wacker Corporation** manufactures a line of very high quality portable generators. Sotcher Measurement assisted them by designing a fully automatic testing station. The test station not only automates the generator testing, but provides a data acquisition system as well. We are working with them to adapt the test station for use with 50 Hz, 400 volt systems for export.
- **The Xerox Corporation**, with its worldwide manufacturing and distributions, needed automatic test stations. To meet legendary Xerox quality standards, Sotcher Measurement designed test stations for them that conducted the necessary safety tests and also traced every repair action on each product.

Manufacturers are finding that international distribution of their products imposes a number of changes in their production techniques. Most have already obtained certification to ISO9001 and are enjoying the benefits of international recognition. In some cases they are finding that following ISO standards has increased their customer satisfaction and net profits through quality improvements. The test equipment offered by Sotcher Measurement has assisted these companies in meeting their ISC commitments and beyond. Some of the most important areas have been in adapting their production lines to allow a wider mix of products to be produced with a minimum of disturbance and at a practical price.

The important development on the horizon is the continued emphasis on quality. The ISO standards have been a big step forward, but most companies are finding that is just a start. To be competitive in the international market an iron tight quality system must be in place. Sotcher Measurement has assisted a number of companies by helping them modernize their testing processes. This includes not only providing test equipment that meets the international testing standards, but helping them set up a data acquisition system that allows them to learn more about the products they produce. It is easy to set up a system that collects a lot of data and in a high speed manufacturing facility there is a potential for reams of data. It's much more important that the data collected be the right data, that it be accurate and, most importantly, that it be presented in a form that encourages clear, decisive action. Without an action step the data is of little value.

Sotcher has assisted in providing data collection systems that draw data from every item tested, relies on a sample of data from an audit test station or a combination of both. Tracking the product through production and its lifetime of service and use is practical on some items. The important step is to present the information in a manner that assures that a timely action will be taken. We have been able to assist in this step through the use of easy to understand color displays with the information presented in the language of the operator using the test station. While English is widely accepted in the world, it is not necessarily the language of choice for production employees. We offer large electronic scoreboards that provide all members in the work cell up to the minute results from their efforts. As the data is obtained, results are presented in summary form on the computer screen, allowing the inspector and supervisor an on the spot update. Printouts from the database are tailored to the customers specific needs. Data is often presented in graphic form for easier comprehension. It is through these innovative steps that Sotcher Measurement helps our customer achieve their place in the international appliance market.