



Hazardous Location Information

ATEX REVIEW

General Information on the ATEX Directive



What are the ATEX Directives?

The ATEX Directives are the Explosive Atmosphere Directive (LAW) for the European Union (EU). They are important because, unlike previous directives concerning hazardous areas, they are New Approach Directives and thus mandatory rather than advisory.

There are two ATEX (from the French "ATmosphere EXplosible") directives, one concerning equipment and protective systems for use in potentially explosive atmospheres and one concerning the safety and health of workers potentially at risk from exposure to explosive atmospheres.

ATEX Directive 94/9/EC The ATEX Directive concerning equipment and protective systems intended for use in potentially explosive atmospheres is mainly of interest to the equipment manufacturer and supplier although there are some aspects (mainly associated with the availability of spares and stock items) which will be of concern to the equipment user. This directive came into effect on a

voluntary basis from 1 March 1996 and became mandatory on 1 July 2003.

From this date, it became necessary for all products placed on the market or put into use to comply with the Directive, even if they are only intended for use in their country of origin. The ATEX Directives apply to the members of the European Economic Area (EEA), and has also been adopted by Switzerland, the Czech Republic, and Hungary. Other European countries will possibly follow.

"Equipment" is defined as any item, electrical or mechanical, which contains or constitutes a potential ignition source and which requires special measures to be incorporated in its design and / or its installation in order to prevent the ignition source from initiating an explosion in the surrounding atmosphere.

Also included in the term "equipment" are safety or control devices installed outside the hazardous area but having an explosion protection function. A wide range of products fall within the definition of equipment, including electric motors, compressors, diesel engines, lighting fittings, control and communication devices, and monitoring and detection equipment.

The EU ATEX Directive forms part of the "CE" marking regulations. The background to the Directive is based on the need for the harmonization of standards and safety requirements. CE marking of equipment also confirms compliance with all other relevant directives such as: Low Voltage Directive - 73/23 EEC, Electro Magnetic Compatibility Directive - 89/336/EEC and Machinery Directive - 98/37/EC. In recent years, IEC Standards have been published which set worldwide standards for hazardous area equipment. These standards are the result of several years of work by the national and regional standards bodies, such as CSA and CENELEC.

"The Purge + Pressurizing Specialists"

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The purpose of the ATEX Directive is to enforce the Euro-Norm (EN) version of new standards within Europe. Most products will require certification by a "European Notified Body".

A Notified Body is a body that is independent of the supply of the products and has the necessary technical competence and administrative structure to assess the conformity of products and manufacturers within the requirements of the Directive. A Notified Body must be appointed and approved by its government, who in turn notifies the European Commission of the appointment. In general, they will be the recognized certification bodies in their field. Expo Technologies has been working with many of the certification bodies in order to obtain the necessary Certification for Expo and other manufacturers products.

What Implications are attached to this Directive?

Certificates issued by European Test Houses, such as SCS, BASEEFA, LCIE, and PTB, became invalid for manufacture and installation after 1 July 2003. This means that some Expo Technologies certified hazardous area products have ceased to be available within the EU for hazardous area installation after that date, including the supply of some spares.

It must be emphasized that the text above merely touches the surface of the issues covered by the ATEX Directives themselves. Topics such as equipment categories, certification requirements, essential health & safety requirements, marking and quality assurance surveillance to name but a few have not been addressed, as the content of this document would multiply considerably.

Secondly, all new equipment and installations must comply with the Directive. Expo Technologies has re-certified products that continue to be offered.

ATEX Directive 1992/92/EC

The ATEX Directive concerning the minimum requirements for improving the safety and health protection if workers potentially at risk from exposure to explosive atmospheres is of concern to those operating plant or sites which involve hazardous areas.

In general terms in the UK, it covers many topics already dealt with by for example, The Health and Safety at Work Act. There are some specific points which need addressing by site operators and employers although for well organized and managed sites the majority of the work required is simply a case of bringing together existing documents and procedures.

Expo Technologies personnel will be happy to answer specific questions you have relating to our equipment of specific applications you may have.

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