QUALITY FASTENERS &

The buzz word in the nineties was "Quality Accreditation". Every company was scrambling to get accredited, with clients believing if their suppliers were accredited they had nothing to worry about as the product they were purchasing would be a quality product . Warburtons was one of the first of the merchant distributors to gain this accreditation (as seen by our 3 digit registration QEC948) - we saw it as a way to improve business as well as a marketing tool. The mania surrounding quality accreditation has now long passed and has now moved forward to being a business tool - to help a business better understand and communicate with its clients to deliver the products and services according to the customers expectations. Quality is a given in this day and age . We are part of a global economy and have a right to quality products . They are there - we just have to seek them out . It is far too simple in this electronic age to put up a web page with glossy pictures and statements and then expect the quality of the product will be the same.

The only thing that does matter in the subject of quality is the actual product itself. The whole quality system means nothing if the product is of inferior quality and does not meet the standards it was sold under.

The quality of same imported fasteners sold in Australia has been decreasing over the last 5 years. The virtual withdrawal of Ajax Fasteners from manufacturing fasteners for the general market means that 98% of fasteners sold in Australia are imported. This in itself is not a problem from a quality viewpoint, however with increasing pressure on prices most product is now being imported from China and not Taiwan and Korea. For commercial grade products such as Class 4.6 bolting this is not a serious problem , with many quality manufacturers capable of producing product that meet the standards for which they are sold under. However, heat treated high tensile product is a completely different scenario .

High tensile products , bolts , nuts , and washers are "critical fasteners" and need to be considered in that light. To carry out a simple hardness test or a single random tensile test is not sufficient to warrant a product. Of great concern is that test certificates supplied by a few suppliers had no correlation to the product at all, chemical compositions were vastly different to those results obtained and hence one must question whether they were legitimate test certificates. One also has to question these manufacturers' ability to trace steel lots through their factories as being slightly dubious.

We are not implying that all high tensile bolts supplied from China do not meet the standards, however over the last 2 or 3 years there have been more products with problems than all of them put together in the last 30 years . Unfortunately in a number of cases the test certificates provided were in essence not worth the paper they were written on.

In the USA they now have the "Counterfeit Fastener Act" that was passed as law in America to overcome this very problem, after major difficulties were experienced during the first Gulf war with fasteners failing on military equipment. These failed fasteners did not meet the relevant standards and in some cases were consciously marked with the wrong head markings. It is just a matter of time until a major incident in Australia occurs along the same lines. Yes, we can import or obtain product imported from China at a significant price advantage, however like everything else in life the greater the margins then the greater are the risks . The cost of a faulty fastener failing in service is not just the cost of the fastener but the cost of recalls , down time , replacement of parts , litigation just to name a few . Frightening thought isn't it!. Remember it is not sufficient to have a piece of paper (test certificate) stating the product meets a standard and it would certainly be little help in a major failure. Fastener companies hold product liability insurance which would not even cover the cost of loss of production in a Petrochemical or truck manufacturing plant for a day,

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Don't take the chance and risk a major failure by purchasing on price alone or importers or distributors who do not understand what they are supplying. A high tensile fastener is not a DIY product - it is a critical product and the purchase price should reflect this.

So what are we saying in all this? - That all fasteners from China are rubbish? - that anyone importing fasteners from China doesn't know what they are doing ? Definitely not need to.
What we are saying is that you know your fasteners, know what is critical to you and your customers and know which are the reputable brands in the market. For sure , look for suppliers who have accreditation but importantly look for suppliers who know their product, who know their suppliers and who put demands on their suppliers to be totally and fully traceable from the coil of wire used to the final finished product , through such processes as plating and heat treatment , hardness and core testing , yield tests and tensile tests to the final lab inspections and hold them accountable to these results . Near enough is not acceptable in any high tensile fastener particularly anything in the range of 120,000 psi or higher ie Grade 5 and 8 fasteners , Class 8.8 , 10.9 and 12.9 or hardened products such as washers to Rc 39 - Rc 45 hardness.
All products need to be traceable and fully qualified and certified from the test certificates to the head markings on the product.
A quality supplier / manufacturer will find the faulty products through statistical testing and hence these products will never find their way out of a factory.

What is Thomas Waburtons role in this process?

We recognize and understand these issues having been subjected to a number of questionable products over the last few years . We blame no-one in this and put it down to a learning curve for us , our suppliers and their suppliers . It was basically caused by a mass exodus of manufacturers from their home soil into China . It isn't going to change so we have to live with the problem and make sure that we work with our supplier network demanding top quality products . Our suppliers are working with us on this and we are moving into a new era where all our critical fasteners will soon be batch traceable from the steel used to the product we supply to you and hence be totally traceable and truly " quality assured ".

In line with automotive requirements of the major automotive manufacturers (Ford, GM, Toyota etc) we will be reducing our supplier base and requiring these suppliers to use the same manufacturing process each time they manufacture or supply goods to us. These products must be qualified and totally traceable.

There may be a small premium added to these articles however this is a small price to pay for "quality assured products ".

Quality System
Quality Endorsed Company
ISO 9001 : 2000
QEC 948
Head Office

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