Complete Compliance Helps Manufacturers Navigate the Maze of Government Regulations

Avery Dennison service is simple and reliable
By Steven Marks, Director, Product Compliance, Avery Dennison

There's no doubt the world is constantly changing, and the same holds true for government regulations impacting the label and packaging materials industry. During the 1980s and '90s, most government regulations focused on safety and environmental issues.

A decade ago, between 200 and 300 new regulations affected the label and packaging materials industry and its customers annually. In recent years, the addition of more government regulatory bodies and areas of regulation has resulted in 1,000 to 1,500 new regulations each year.

The challenge to keep abreast with new regulations is complicated by the many industries involved – from food and pharmaceutical to automotive, chemicals and electronics – and various regulations in different countries. China's restriction of the use of certain hazardous substances (RoHS) for electronic communication products is, for example, very different and more extensive in certain areas than the European Union RoHS.

Many new regulations relate to recycling, with a number of states and local jurisdictions introducing regulatory programs to reduce the use and disposal of certain packaging materials. Companies seeking to package products in new containers, for example, are encouraged to use recycled materials and must explain why they cannot use widely recycled packaging materials such as rigid single-use food containers or PET, the type of plastic used by most soda bottlers.

In addition, consumers demand more information on packaging to assist them with in-store purchases. They want to know the product price and price comparisons along with reviews/ratings, special offers, ingredients, health claims and recycling details.

Responsibility for compliance varies

Large corporations typically employ specialists who keep abreast of new government regulations and provide the company with regulatory updates to ensure company labels and packaging are compliant. Small to medium size companies and local entrepreneurs, however, are not as fortunate and must rely on industry resources.

A food manufacturer, for example, may want to include product price and other details on a newly designed packaging system for a food product. Since the product will be sold in the U.S., both the label and the packaging must comply with FDA regulations.

The food manufacturer often has no one on staff that is sufficiently knowledgeable about packaging regulations, and so it contacts the converter for help. The converter, in turn, often relies on the label and packaging materials manufacturer to provide compliance data.

Some label and packaging materials manufacturers offer data sheets and other regulatory information online. Reviewing the information and determining what regulations are applicable, however, takes time – sometimes several days.

Considering regulatory requirements early in the product development cycle rather than as an add-on at the end of the process can help save time and money. But to accomplish this objective, companies must be able to access regulatory information and purchase fully compliant labels and packaging materials in a timely manner.

Complete Compliance

Avery Dennison introduced Complete Compliance in Europe in 2015 to provide converters with regulatory expertise, training, market intelligence and resources to help ensure compliance. The company typically receives more than 10,000 regulatory requests from converters and end users every year and can usually respond with regulatory information for the U.S. and Europe in one day.

Complete Compliance (http://label.averydennison.com/en/home/resource-center/compliance.html) is a service designed to protect converters' business against regulatory risks while allowing converters to offer end-users the right materials for specific applications. Avery Dennison tracks regulations in the U.S. and around the world and employs technical and compliance specialists who review applicable regulations and check that products are still compliant before releasing it to the Avery Dennison sales team and customers.

Requests for support regarding regulatory requirements come from various industries and different countries. A manufacturing company planning to distribute a new product internationally may meet European Union regulations on REACH (Registration, Evaluation, Authorization, and Restriction of Chemicals), but may need help with REACH regulations in other parts of the world since REACH requirements are different and enforced on a country-by-country basis.

Regulations for various market segments

Depending on the product and targeted geographic market and product segment, manufacturers must consider a wide variety of regulations and requirements (besides the FDA, RoHS and REACH requirements mentioned above), such as the following:

> UL (Underwriters Laboratories), an American worldwide safety consulting and certification company. Products that bear the UL mark must be tested and certified to comply with the applicable UL Standard(s);

> The Lacey Act, a U.S. federal law designed to prevent trafficking in certain wildlife, fish and plants;

> The U.S. Consumer Protection Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) of 2008, which created a variety of labeling, testing, and certification requirements, and is one of several U.S. statutes that deals with product safety;

> International Material Data System (IMDS), the automobile industry's global standard used by nearly all OEMs;

> Food Safety Framework, EU 1934/2004;

> EU Packaging Directive;

> EU Food Safety Framework;

> EU Timber Regulation (EUTR) relating to legal timber sources.

The extent of the applicable regulations varies among industries. For example, Avery Dennison registers all of the raw materials used to make its products, as applicable, under EU and other country REACH regulations and the products comply with RoHS as well as IMDS requirements for automotive applications. The company also provides notifications to converters on Substances of Very High Concern (SVHC).

Avery Dennison's Customer-Ready Durables Portfolio includes many UL 969-listed products as well as an extensive line of ribbons and press inks that converters can easily adopt into their own UL files. This capability greatly reduces the time and expense that would be required for converters to obtain UL listing on their own.

Regulations are especially complex within the food industry, where the migration of food packaging chemicals into package contents continues to create concerns. Foods high in fat, acid or moisture present more of a labeling challenge than do dry foods.

As mentioned earlier, the FDA regulates food products in the U.S. while EU food compliance is regulated under the Food Safety Framework, EU 1934/2004, EU 10/2011 and related directives. In Asia, China has its own regimes dealing with food contact. Avery Dennison's regulatory knowledge and extensive food-approved portfolio provide converters and brand owners the freedom they need to design labels that differentiate their products on the shelf while meeting regulations in whatever country where they want to sell.

Regulations are intense in other segments, such as pharmaceutical, which presents specific technical challenges. An adhesive, for instance, must be strong enough to securely adhere to a plastic container with a very small radius while simultaneously preventing any adhesive migration.

Converters who help industrial drum manufacturers adhere to Globally Harmonized System (GHS) standards can sidestep costly and time-consuming BS 5609 testing. The Avery Dennison UL-certified laboratory can quickly certify for BS 5609 Section 2 and 3 at no cost to the converter customer. Avery Dennison's certification library includes a wide variety of certified materials, printers, ribbons and ink combinations.

All Avery Dennison materials meet applicable registration obligations in all countries in which it manufactures its products. The company also provides back up documentation confirming that labels and packaging materials are safe for their expected use. If a food product, for example, undergoes an FDA inspection, Avery Dennison, as a third party, will provide backup information to assist the end user with documenting compliance.

Avery Dennison also provides companies with extended compliance information updates when needed.

Compliance as an opportunity

Noncompliance with government regulations is never an option. Companies that do not meet applicable regulatory requirements cannot sell their product and may lose sales and market share. The government can also levy fines and penalties if non-compliant products are sold, depending upon the product and country.

On the other hand, when customers can have full confidence that products and packaging meet compliance regulations, the company's brand image is protected and can be reinforced. Manufacturers in every industry sell their reputations when they sell their products.

Awareness of government regulations and the ability to provide compliant labels and packaging materials can help converters grow their business. Large food corporations, for example, may issue a 50- to 60-page document requesting an explanation of a converter's ability to comply with government regulations. Companies that respond must be able to provide the information requested in a timely basis to qualify for the business … those that do so quickly and accurately can have a significant edge.

Unfortunately, no Compliance 101 course or documentation exists to educate and update manufacturers about government regulations and requirements for compliance. Manufacturers, however, have a compliance partner with Avery Dennison's Complete Compliance and its wide range of compliant labels and packaging materials solutions.

Whether manufacturers work in food, pharmaceuticals, home and personal care, durables or any other segment, Avery Dennison provides access to the expertise, market intelligence, networking and resources to solve compliance issues in the U.S. and around the globe.

Avery Dennison will continue to expand services available through Complete Compliance in an effort to provide converters a one-stop shop for compliance information. A variety of new tools are in development, such as social media feeds with regulatory and product updates, a "Hot Topics" column that will be featured in Avery Dennison's quarterly customer newsletter, and self service compliance statements on the cloud portal.

A global program is being rolled out to help manufacturers and converters reliably and simply meet the growing demands represented by expanding legislation as a way to grow their business.

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