

6 April 2016

Steel & Tube removes all doubt of mesh compliance

Removing any doubt around product compliance will see Steel & Tube only supplying seismic mesh tested by an external laboratory. This follows questions raised in recent weeks around the industry's compliance of seismic mesh.

Steel & Tube CEO Dave Taylor says the company maintains confidence in its seismic mesh, and to reassure customers, mesh supplied by Steel & Tube will now be subject to dual testing and must pass both the in-house and an external laboratory testing.

"We wanted to provide our customers with the same assurances we have in our testing regime. We had been in discussions with our existing testing provider but due to delays, Steel & Tube had to have discussions and engage other external laboratories to carry out testing and this has taken a little while."

"We did this because we wanted further validation of our testing regime and we engaged external laboratories to assist with testing our seismic mesh."

Mr Taylor says despite the laboratories testing against the same standard, Steel & Tube has been surprised by the variability in the results, including results provided by the Commerce Commission, and has encountered significant ambiguity around the interpretation of the testing standards.

"Given this, we want to supply mesh that is tested both internally and externally to remove any doubt around the product's compliance," he says.

"While we follow through a robust validation process, we will only be selling our seismic mesh range that has been passed as compliant by an external testing agent. That may mean some disruption in supply in the short term, but we will not accept anything less than absolute validation."

Mr Taylor supports statements made by the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE), that this is a question of standards.

"Given the ambiguity and interpretation encountered by Steel & Tube, perhaps it's time to review the standards regime through the establishment of an Industry/Government working group"

Ends

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Steel & Tube seismic reinforcing mesh - Questions and Answers

What is this product?

Seismic or ductile steel reinforcing mesh is typically used as reinforcement in concrete floor slabs. Mesh consists of a series of parallel longitudinal wires at a standard spacing welded to each other where they intersect. It is generally used to help reduce concrete cracks/limit concrete crack widths and strengthens the concrete slab.

Where does the raw material come from to produce this product?

Steel & Tube buys its raw material from Pacific Steel to produce reinforcing mesh. Pacific Steel is New Zealand's only manufacturer of reinforcing bar, reinforcing coil and wire products.

When did Steel & Tube begin producing this product?

Steel & Tube has been producing reinforcing meshes for many years. Like others in the steel industry, Steel & Tube developed its capability to produce seismic grade mesh to meet the new seismic standards that came into force in 2012.

Is Steel & Tube confident in its in-house testing regime?

We remain confident in our in-house testing regime.

Since that in-house testing process was set up, an independent testing laboratory has performed tests for Steel & Tube on a number of products, including on prototype seismic mesh as recently as February 2016. Their results continued to show strong alignment with our own in-house testing results. That gave us confidence that our testing regime is accurate.

Having said that, we decided to get further assurances that mesh met standards by doing external testing and a lot has changed since then. Given the variability that we have seen in the results across different independent testing laboratories, we are having all our product externally tested to remove any doubt about compliance.

Why has Steel & Tube requested additional external testing?

Steel & Tube wanted to be able to give its customers the necessary assurances regarding its steel mesh. We decided to do this by getting our seismic reinforcing mesh independently tested.

Is Steel & Tube sure the product it produces is compliant and safe?

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment has said in a release on 4 March 2016, that this is an issue of standards, not safety. <http://www.mbie.govt.nz/about/whats-happening/news/2016/mbie-not-concerned-product-a-safety-risk-for-houses>

How did the results vary?

Some of the results were significantly higher than Steel & Tube's internal testing, some were consistent, and some were lower. Some of the laboratories had a degree of consistency while others were quite variable.

There are a number of variable factors that can affect the sample. There is variation in steel making for the feed material, the mesh manufacturing process, sample collection and different interpretation to the testing standards.



While we do not have all the answers, Steel & Tube would like to work with relevant parties, including industry bodies and government agencies to see how we can address these issues and provide further assurance to customers.

How long have the results shown variability?

Up until as late as February 2016, our in-house results on other products continued to show strong alignment with the testing performed by an independent testing laboratory on those other Steel & Tube products, which included prototype seismic mesh. The variability in results between testing laboratories has only come to light as we engaged external laboratories to carry out testing on our seismic mesh.

Why has it taken Steel & Tube so long to have its product tested by external laboratories?

We wanted to provide our customers with the same assurances we have in our testing regime. We have been in discussions with our existing testing provider but due to delays, Steel & Tube had to have discussions and engage other external laboratories to carry out testing and this has taken a little while.

What does it mean to dual test?

This means both internal testing by S&T and testing by an external laboratory.

Who will be providing external testing of Steel & Tube's product?

We are currently working with steelmaker Pacific Steel.