



Industry welcomes safeguards on imports

By Simon Taylor

European engineering and manufacturing companies have welcomed a package of measures agreed by MEPs and EU governments, which would improve safety controls on imported products and strengthen the role of national authorities over product safety.

Adrian Harris, secretary-general of Orgalime, the European engineering industries association, said that his members were "pretty pleased" with the package agreed in the European Parliament last week (21 February). MEPs approved reports on market surveillance, product marketing standards and on mutual recognition of products within the internal market.

Harris highlighted that importers would have to share responsibility for ensuring that products entering the EU were made according to the same standards as goods produced within the Union. "There's a better spread of responsibility over the entire supply chain," Harris said. In future, if product safety inspectors found problems with goods, importers could react more quickly to remove faulty goods from sale.

"Including importers in the chain makes it easy to act fast," he said. The name of importers would also be included on products or their packaging to improve traceability. In addition, the Rapex system for notifying EU-wide authorities about unsafe consumer goods would be extended to all goods.

Harris said that the measures would ensure EU governments improved their communication among themselves as well as internally, for example with customs, and health and safety officials exchanging information on a more systematic basis. "We have to ensure that rules are respected and the only people that can do that are the member states," he said.

Following an agreement in first reading between MEPs and EU governments, the new measures will come into force from 1 January 2010.