



BE AWARE

MCERTS could alter your business

WATER WASTEWATER

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Angus Fosten of Partech Instruments looks at the implications for operators

Any organisation, whether an operator of a water and wastewater treatment plant or manufacturer of instrumentation used in environmental monitoring cannot have missed the arrival of the Environment Agency's Monitoring Certification Scheme (MCERTS). Set up to deliver quality environmental measurements, MCERTS provides for the product certification of instruments, the competency certification of personnel and the accreditation of laboratories and on-site inspection.



Where an application requires the employment of continuous water monitors, MCERTS provides instrument manufacturers with an independent authoritative endorsement of their products. In addition, it gives confidence to potential users that the instrument selected is robust and performs to the standards accepted by UK regulatory bodies. Partech Instruments, as an international manufacturer of continuous water monitors is embracing MCERTS for its instruments designed for treated wastewater, untreated wastewater and receiving waters.

Where MCERTS will have the most impact is for those operators seeking to self-monitor effluent flows. There are two applications that are relevant to monitoring discharges: one for the self-monitoring of the effluent flow and which is now an established a continuing requirement, and the new requirement covering equipment certification.

With respect to the first, it was the aim of the Environment Agency to ensure that operator self-monitoring of flows is performed correctly and to an

acceptable standard. Now it will be essential that the operator only uses instruments that have been independently quality assured in accordance with MCERTS. In other words, they must be fit for purpose. Furthermore, the Environment Agency would prefer to see continuous monitoring systems employed where measurement is carried out in-situ. This has the benefit of providing almost real-time results as opposed to snapshots of the long term discharge profile.

Under the Integrated Pollution Prevention and Control (IPPC) directive industrial operators are responsible for carrying out monitoring of emissions from installations that fall under the directive. If this involves continuous monitoring, then the determinands covered by MCERTS are: turbidity, pH, ammonia, COD, TOC, dissolved oxygen, total phosphorous, nitrate and total oxidised nitrogen. These are some of the most important parameters when

monitoring discharges from wastewater treatment works and other industrial processes and in the future only analysers with MCERTS accreditation will be acceptable.

Attaining MCERTS approval will prove to be necessary for all manufacturers of continuous water monitors seeking to maintain their presence in the industry. There are no short cuts to gaining certification as conformity testing can only be carried out by laboratories that are accredited to EN ISO/IEC 17025:2000. Currently, conformity testing is available from WRc, the Environment Agency's national testing laboratory service and Sira Environmental Limited, who are managers of the scheme.

Product certification also requires the manufacturer to be able to demonstrate that the manufacturing process is controlled under a quality management system and producing equipment that delivers consistent





performance. However, it is accepted that design and manufacturing changes will take place so the manufacturer is required to keep Sira informed of any changes.

For potential customers and regulators, MCERTS product certification provides valuable assurance that equipment performance is being maintained as all changes are tracked and periodic audits are carried out.

Partech has already put in place a framework that will see its continuous water monitors gaining MCERTS certification in the very near future. With a high product installed base within the UK and a fast-growing demand from the EU, having MCERTS will ensure that Partech maintains its strong position and continue to expand on the international front.

Throughout the EU and many other parts of the world there is a growing demand for continuous water monitors that conform to a single international certification scheme and it is inevitable that in the not too distant future MCERTS will be a contract tendering requirement. Most importantly, it will create a level playing field in what is becoming a very competitive market and eventually eliminate those products that are not fit for purpose. MCERTS accredited analysers will give operators the confidence that they are using the equipment that is of the highest standard and will ensure that by doing so they are safe in the knowledge that they are meeting the criteria for safe discharge consents.