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State of the Art



# CERTIFICATION

## UL CERTIFICATION IN THE US

FLANDERS INVESTMENT & TRADE MARKET SURVEY

**FLANDERS**  
INVESTMENT &  
TRADE

## UL CERTIFICATION

Safety Standards Verification in the US

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

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If your product carries the CE Mark in Europe and you are looking at exporting to the US, we highly recommend you get your product UL certified for the US market.

The UL mark is administered by the [Underwriters Laboratories](#), which is a third-party certification company, similar to the CE mark, commonly used in Belgium and Europe.

The UL mark is a way for industrial equipment and home appliance manufacturers to prove/show that their products conform to all safety standards required in the US. The **CE mark is not recognized in the US**, so as a Belgian manufacturer you will have to get your products recertified for the US market, where UL is the most used testing facility.

## 1.1 BACKGROUND ON US SAFETY STANDARDS

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) was established by law in 1970 by the US Congress primarily to improve workplace safety. OSHA is now part of the US Department of Labor. OSHA legislation states, among other things, that all electrical equipment must be inspected. To perform these tests, OSHA has created **NRTLs**: [Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories](#). In its inception there were originally two of those “nationally recognized test labs” – UL was one of them.

There are currently around [30 recognized NRTLs](#). Where UL is the best known and most widely used in the US. UL is an independent of the government; it is a ‘private organization’; so are the other NRTLs, which also do not receive subsidies from the Government.

The inspection by an NRTL checks whether the product meets a series of standards. These standards are collectively defined by **ANSI**: [American National Standards Institute](#).



## 2. UL MARK

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### 2.1 ABOUT UL LLC

The [Underwriters Laboratory](#) was founded in 1894 near Chicago, Illinois, as a third party product safety testing and certification organization. It is the most prominent and recognizable US safety standards testing organization, which also sets industry-wide standards on new products.

UL is a for profit company (was nonprofit organization till 2012) that is privately owned and operated with 64 laboratories, testing and certification facilities in 100+ countries.

Obtaining UL Certification is important because it demonstrates manufacturers, service providers, and products competency and compliance with OSHA's administered safety standards.

### 2.2 WHAT IS UL CERTIFICATION MARK

UL certifies and sets standards for [industrial equipment and home appliance](#) products. Nearly 20 billion products from 70,000 manufacturers bear the UL mark each year. They evaluate 20,000 product types, and more than 3 million products are [UL-Listed](#).

Some examples are:

- Sustainability Standards
- Standards for Electrical and Electronic Products
- Life Safety Standards
- Standards for Building Products
- Standards for Industrial Control Equipment
- Standards for Plastic Materials
- Standards for Wire and Cable

UL certification includes electrical and fire safety risk by making sure that wire sizes are correct and that devices can handle the amount of current they claim to be able to. They also ensure that products are constructed correctly so that there is no risk of mechanical hazard or spread of fire.

You can **search for specific UL standards** that apply to your product or process in their [UL Standards Catalog](#) – they are not free though, you will have to [buy the standards](#) from them.

UL certifies not only [products](#), as mentioned above, but also provides certification for:

- [Facilities](#) – Evaluate manufacturing facilities based on healthcare safety regulations.
- [Processes](#) – Help sustain best practices across organizations and value networks.
- [Personnel](#) – Training personnel with industry accepted and standardized skills
- [Systems](#)



## 2.3 TIERS OF CERTIFICATION

There's no such thing as a general [UL Mark](#) of approval. Instead, it's broken down into three tiers. These three tiers are UL listed, UL recognized, and UL classified.

### 1. UL Listed

- a. Used for stand-alone products
- b. Seal is applied to the product
- c. The UL Listed seal means that the product has been tested by UL to nationally recognized safety and sustainability standards.



### 2. UL Recognized Component Mark

- a. Less consumer-facing and focuses more on machinery and parts that make other products
- b. The component recognition marking is found on a wide range of products, including some switches, power supplies, printed wiring boards, some kinds of industrial control equipment and thousands of other products.
- c. UL Recognized components are intended to be installed in another device, system or end product.



### 3. UL Classified

- a. UL mark for use under limited or special conditions



## 2.4 WHY GET YOUR PRODUCT UL CERTIFIED

Even though the UL mark does not carry any legal weight beyond that of any other trademarks, it is the **most widely used in the US**. You will have a hard time finding a market in the US for your product if it does not have the UL Mark.

Many local codes in the US refer to UL safety standards, which contractors, distributors and others, will be looking for to make sure that the product is built to code.

Additionally, local jurisdictional authorities, such as building, electrical and fire inspectors, may be reluctant to accept a product for installation in a building unless it carries a recognized third-party compliance mark such as the UL Mark.

If your product is competing with UL marked product, and yours is not, the American consumer/customer will likely pick the UL marked product. There are many instances where distributors are not willing to stock products without the UL mark.

Manufacturers can obtain certification to both U.S. and Canadian national standards through a single UL certification process. The label for products certified for both Canada and the United States includes "C" and "US" outside of the UL logo.



## 3. COST & TIMING UL CERTIFICATION

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### 3.1 COST OF UL CERTIFICATION

The cost of getting your product UL certified can be expensive and take quite some time. The exact cost differs widely, depending on the product, but prices can range between \$5,000 to \$15,000+ USD.

The only way to get an accurate cost estimate for getting the UL Mark is to visit UL's [Online Product Submittal](#) process form and [Request a Quote](#) online.

### 3.2 TIMING OF UL CERTIFICATION

Depending on your products level of [current compliance](#), the timing can be months to over half a year. The standards for the CE Mark are generally different to those used by UL, so, if your product is CE listed in Belgium, it does not mean that it automatically qualifies for the UL Mark.

### 3.3 ALTERNATIVE

The cost of getting a UL mark is not negligible, as mentioned above. In some cases - depending on the type of product you wish to export to the US - the cost of a direct UL approval can be partially reduced by obtaining the UL approval 'indirectly'.

Suppose, for example, that you wish to have an electrical control box inspected. It may then be more cost effective if you **outsource the manufacturing** of it by a **certified manufacturing facility**. You could approach a control cabinet manufacturer in the US who's facility is UL certified (= e.g. receives a weekly visit from UL in his manufacturing facility) and have him build your control cabinets, with, among other things, UL-approved components (= outsourcing part of your production)... and UL approvals.

To find such manufacturers you can start with the components that are in your device and, once you know the suppliers of your components (in the US) you can look for which manufacturers supply them. It makes sense to request multiple quotes because the prices for this service can vary considerably between different manufacturers.



## 4. CONTACTING UL

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UL International has offices in more than 104 countries where you can get your products tested and certified. For Belgian companies we recommend that you contact one of their Netherlands locations.

### 4.1 UL CONTACT NEAR BELGIUM

UL has **two main locations** in the Netherlands:

1. **UL International B.V. - Arnhem**

Westervoortsedijk 60  
Arnhem  
Gelderland, 6827AT  
T: +31 26 376 4800  
[info.nl@ul.com](mailto:info.nl@ul.com)

2. **UL International B.V. – Utrecht**

Arthur van Schendelstraat 630  
Utrecht  
Utrecht Province, 3511 MJ  
T: +31 26 376 4981  
[info.nl@ul.com](mailto:info.nl@ul.com)

### 4.2 UL CONTACT IN USA

If your company is already manufacturing in the US, you can reach them at their US HQ in Northbrook, IL or a UL location that is closer to where your plant is located. UL has 40+ locations spread over the entire US.

**UL Headquarters**

333 Pfingsten Road  
Northbrook, Illinois 60062  
T: +1 .847 272 8800  
[CustomerExperienceCenter@ul.com](mailto:CustomerExperienceCenter@ul.com)



## 5. SPECIFIC PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

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The above mentioned information regarding UL certification is meant as a general overview and not a one-size fits all alternative. If you have specific questions regarding your product, please do not hesitate to contact FIT Chicago ([chicago@fitagency.com](mailto:chicago@fitagency.com)) directly and we can provide a more tailored answer, specific to your product needs, for the US market.

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*The information in this publication is provided for background information that should enable you to get a picture of the subject treated in this document. It is collected with the greatest care based on all data and documentation available at the moment of publication. Thus this publication was never intended to be the perfect and correct answer to your specific situation. Consequently it can never be considered a legal, financial or other specialized advice. Flanders Investment & Trade (FIT) accepts no liability for any errors, omissions or incompleteness, and no warranty is given or responsibility accepted as to the standing of any individual, firm, company or other organization mentioned.*

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