

Unsafe Imported Telescopic Ladders



For many years - until a recent buyout by American company Wernerco - ladder manufacturer ABRU Ltd was based in Belper, Derbyshire, where the business enjoyed 'home authority' support from Derbyshire Trading Standards Service (DTSS). In the course of this close working relationship, concerns were raised about the safety of imported telescopic ladders.

Following ABRU's internal checks, DTSS found 3 telescopic ladders that failed the EN131 Standards they claimed to meet and secured Government funding for a wider East Midlands Trading Standards project covering a further 10 telescopic ladders on sale at local retailers and via the internet. Tests by British Standards revealed all 13 ladders were unsafe as they lacked structural strength and were not robust enough to withstand wear and tear. One of the ladders snapped during testing. All the ladders involved were withdrawn from supply or recalled with 11 confirmed as being manufactured in China. Derbyshire County Council issued a [press release](#) highlighting the dangers to the public and prosecuted the Herefordshire-based importer whose ladder snapped resulting in fines totalling £10,000 plus £2,000 costs.

“Werner has enjoyed an excellent relationship with Derbyshire Trading Standards who have always been happy to help. They have also played a vital role in ensuring that we can compete on a fair basis by conducting regular market surveillance. We have been very happy to participate in a Government backed exercise to examine the safety of telescopic ladders manufactured abroad and imported into the EU. Serious safety concerns have been raised about some of these ladders which all claim compliance with UK and European safety standards, and at least one has been involved in a recent fatality. Without the enforcement role of trading standards, UK consumers are unknowingly buying unsafe products and UK businesses will lose out to foreign imports that are just not up to standard’. — Paul Bruton, Product Development Director, Werner UK Operations

KEY POINTS

Support Received

- Market surveillance - sampling and testing of products on sale in the UK and taking appropriate steps to ensure safety compliance and to maintain a 'level playing field'.

Outcome

- Non-compliant products were removed from sale thus protecting the public from potential harm from an unsafe product.

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