

Glass blocks and pavers

- > All you need to know, and how to find your way in the world of glass blocks

Tips for all those involved, from production to quality and installation, with particular reference to the regulatory system.



“THIS UNKNOWN ELEMENT”, THE GLASS BLOCK!

With this short summary we wish to provide concise and complete information about the standards and regulations that govern glass block production, use and marketing.

The GLASS BLOCK is “transparent” and, similarly, all the indications and information available at the time of purchasing and/or handling must also be transparent.

The packaging is consequently of primary importance since it says a lot about the “contents” and many of the indications are MANDATORY for the purpose of ensuring correct identification of the product.

January 1st 2007 was an important date as it marked the entering into force of the regulations that explicitly govern these obligations!

Glass blocks: features and standards

Glass blocks are identified, characterised, regulated, and classified by a variety of different features and regulations.

They are coded at a European level by the **EN** standards (that have different names in the different Member Countries of the European Union, e.g. **UNI** in Italy, **DIN** in Germany, etc.) and by the **ISO** standards which are valid all over the world.

The difference between the two is that once the EN standards have been issued and adopted at a national level by all the EU Member States they **become official and are therefore binding (with legal force) for all effects and purposes within the European Union**. On the other hand, ISO standards are only valid as “recommendations” worldwide. It must be noted that EN and ISO standards do not diverge substantially with regard to contents or purpose (ISO standards normally adopt EN contents).

There are numerous EN standards pertaining to the glass block sector that have different purposes and objectives. The diagram alongside illustrates the main current standards: it is important to note that technical committees are still at work and several standards are still in progress.

The diagram below illustrates the European (EN) and International (ISO) standards which are either approved or in the process of technical definition (“projects”) and which are applicable to glass blocks for walls and floors:

UNI - EN 1051-1 (referring to the Italian standards)

Approved and published standard

The purpose of this standard is to define the maximum allowed size variation, the shape and the technical features of the materials used for the production of glass blocks for walls and floors.

STANDARDS “REVOLVING” AROUND GLASS BLOCKS

ISO TC 160/SG1

Approved standard

This is the international standard that adopts the contents of EN 1051-1 .

It is only valid as a recommendation unless explicitly referred to in state legislation, in which case it takes on the force of a binding obligation.

EN 1051-2

Approved standard and in publishing.

Its objective is to define the production standards for glass blocks. This standard has already been approved by the various national certification bodies of EU Member States (UNI for Italy) and once published it will become “binding” and the blocks will bear the CE mark. The publication is due within the end of 2007 / first half of 2008.

STANDARDS FOR GLASS BLOCKS

The impact on the final user and the installer deriving from compliance with standards.

The European regulations governing the production, installation, import and marketing of these products are already in force. A set of data which are useful for identifying the producer, the country of origin, type, class, shape, dimensions etc. should already be provided on the packaging.

The EN 1051-1 standard (in Italy UNI EN 1051-1, in Germany DIN EN 1051-1, etc..) for example, defines the maximum size variation, shape parameters, as well as the classes that the various families of blocks for walls and floors fall under.

It is ESSENTIAL to note that the standard defines/subdivides the blocks into three different "CLASSES" (3 quality levels).

These classes (Class 1, Class 2 and Class 3) are defined on the basis of the maximum size variation allowed for blocks (up to a maximum of 1 mm, over 1 mm and up to a maximum of 1.5 mm, and over 1.5 mm up to a maximum of 2 mm of variation to the nominal size respectively).

SEVES, world leader and specialist in the glass block sector, has always distinguished itself from other producers who operate marginally in this market thanks to the high quality of its products. SEVES Group factories were the first in the world to obtain the ISO certification as they have always operated in compliance with stricter quality criteria than those laid down in national standards.

Today, considering the new European regulatory environment, SEVES can declare that all its products belong to Class 1, which is the highest possible quality level.

**ALL THE GLASS BLOCKS PRODUCED
BY SEVES BELONG TO CLASS 1 !**

Why does it make a difference what class you belong to?

It must be noted here that in using glass blocks, the installation phase is a highly delicate operation on which the quality of the finished product and the speed of execution both depend; in the "dry" laying (wood and metal structures) even the slightest variation or discrepancy in size can jeopardise the final result.

The installation cost is also a relevant factor and it consequently influences the total value of the work to be carried out.

That's why the superior "quality" of the glass blocks with "precise" height and size will allow for state-of-the-art creations (walls, prefabricated panels, etc.), in this way also reducing the installation costs.

IMPORT OF GLASS BLOCKS FROM NON-EU COUNTRIES

Besides being subjected to EU regulations, importers of products manufactured outside the EU are obliged to comply with several important national laws pertaining to:

- > **Product labelling**
- > **Designation of origin or geographical indications**
- > **Product safety**
- > **Liability for damage caused by defective products (known as producer's liability)**

With regards to product safety, in addition to specific rules for individual product types, in Europe there is a general discipline about the general safety of products laid down in Directive n. 92/59/EC, then modified by Directive n. 2001/95/EC. The product safety rules apply not only to the producers but to the distributors also.

In fact, the manufacturers are not the only ones considered as producers, but also any other person who presents himself/herself as producer by affixing their own name, trademark or any other distinguishing mark to the product; those who service the products, or the representatives of the producer if the latter is not incorporated within the EU, or in the case of not having a representative residing in the EU; the importer of the product, and any other economic operators in the marketing chain whose activity influences the safety characteristics of the products. All products launched on the market must be safe. Products are considered as safe if, in normal use or reasonably foreseeable conditions, including their duration, operation, installation and maintenance, they do not present any risks, or at least only minimum risks that are compatible with the use of the product and deemed acceptable in accordance with a high level of protection of personal health and safety.

Amongst other things, the producer must also provide the consumer with all the useful information for assessing and preventing risks deriving from normal use. He must also adopt the necessary measures for allowing the consumer to be informed about any risks and undertake all initiatives for preventing risks, also including the withdrawal of the product from the market. Moreover, the distributor has specific obligations even when not considered as a producer.

For example, the distributor must not supply products if he is

aware, or should have been aware of their risks, and he must cooperate with the Authorities by providing information about the actions undertaken to protect consumers, keeping all suitable documentation and tracing the origin of the products for a period of ten years after release to the final consumer. Failure to comply with these obligations will entail the enforcement of criminal and administrative sanctions.

In particular, liability for damage deriving from defective products in the European Union is ruled by national legislation in force in Member States and by Directive n. 85/374/EC then modified by Directive n. 99/34/EC.

For the products imported from non-EU Countries, the liability of the producer also applies to the importer, even if the former has been identified. Moreover, the distributor is always liable in the event of the producer not being identified.

The community customs code regulations apply in ALL European Union (Regulation n.1992/2081/EC that imposes specific obligations to importers).

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