

## **VLS Specifications and Marketing Claims updated guidance**

VLS recognises the right of lubricant blenders, manufacturers and marketers to make marketing claims in connection with the description of their products. However, the use of these claims within the industry is complex and there is little consistency in the use of the terms applied to marketing claims.

The aim of the guidance is to bring clarity in the use of marketing claims, and promote consistency in their use, thereby supporting the end user to better understand these terms and how they are applied in connection with the description and specification of lubricant products.

### **Types of Marketing Claim**

VLS considers that there are three types of generic marketing claims of which two are common.

1. Approved. This means that the product name has been registered with the approval authority and a reblend approval sought and obtained.

2. 'Recommended for use', 'Suitable for use' or 'Meets the requirements of', amongst other terms. These terms indicate that the marketer is making an informed, professional judgement based on supporting technical evidence as to the suitability of a given lubricant to a stated application. These terms can include the following cases:

- an approval exists on the formulation being used but the marketer has decided not to pursue a formal reblend approval for his product name.
- an approval is not technically possible e.g. claims which are self-certified and there is no body to grant approval (e.g. ACEA sequences).
- the specification is technically obsolete or one or more tests are currently unavailable but, on the basis of a technical judgement e.g. similarity with previously tested materials, the product would fully meet all the requirements of the specification.
- the lubricant marketer or technology provider has sufficient robust and relevant supporting data for the recommended application. This should be on the basis of engine test data against the requirements of the OEM specifications and/or data from substantial field trials where appropriate.

3. Not suitable for use. In practice this would normally be indicated simply by the omission to claim one of the above classifications for the product.

In all cases involving marketing claims, it is the responsibility of the product marketer to ensure that they have sufficient data from a technically competent individual or organisation to justify any such claims.

## **VLS Process in the event of a complaint relating to a Marketing Claim**

If a complaint is received that relates to a quantifiable aspect of a marketing claim then the Technical Review Panel (TRP) to the VLS will be asked to make an assessment.

If the product claims an approval then this will be checked with reference to an approval authority, such as an OEM's website. If this is not possible the product marketer (the Named Party) will be asked to provide documentary evidence that a valid and current approval exists.

If the product is 'Recommended for use', 'Suitable for use' or 'Meets the requirements of', the TRP will ask the Named Party (through the VLS Secretariat) to provide details of the technical assessment that underpins the marketing claims.

If the product makes any claims to current ACEA sequences or current API claims then the Named Party would be asked to have their Technology Provider provide the Candidate Data Package underpinning these claims.

In the case of claims for suitability against OEM requirements, the Lubricant Marketer would be asked for a letter from their Technology Provider indicating how they support the suitability of the actual formulation being blended by the Named Party against the OEM claim.

The TRP will also assess the overall coverage of the claims made to ensure that they are not mutually exclusive in terms, for example, of viscometrics or chemical composition.

In the same way that the identity of both the Named Party and the lubricant are withheld from members of the TRP, the identity of the technology provider will also be withheld from the general membership of the TRP. The request for information from the Named Party will be managed through the VLS Secretariat, and the response received will be passed to a member of the TRP who has no affiliation with any single oil marketer, blender or technology provider.

If the Named Party can provide the correct information to show that either an approval has been granted or that their technology provider can robustly underwrite their claims this would be reported to the VLS Supervisory Board through the TRP who would conclude that the complaint is not justified.

If the Named Party cannot or does not provide such supporting information then this would be reported on the website and in Lube Magazine when the details of the complaint are made public. Additionally, in the case of ACEA claims the details would be passed onto ATIEL/SAIL as they would not be compliant with the requirements of EELQMS.