What is the difference between Product Testing, Assessment Reports and Product Certification?

Third party testing, Assessment Reports and third party product certification are very different processes:

Third Party Testing

If third party testing is conducted, a manufacturer or supplier provides an independent test lab with samples. The samples are tested to the required standard and a test report is issued. The information contained in the test report relates to the specific sample that was tested and to the unconfirmed information provided by the sponsor of the test.

Therefore, test reports relate only to the products/materials/samples that were tested and do not necessarily relate to on-going production. Test reports are a statement of fact in relation to what occurred when the test was conducted. Minor changes in the composition of a material from that which was tested may significantly affect the performance of the product/material and may therefore invalidate any test results that have been obtained.

A test report does not contain any verification or make any claims that what was tested is the same product that is being manufactured/sold/placed onto the market by the company who requested the test to be undertaken.

Test evidence (test reports) are a manufacturer's/supplier's evidence or claim that the product they manufacture/supply behaves in a particular way when subjected to the conditions of the test that has been undertaken.

It is the responsibility of the manufacturer/supplier of a product/material to ensure that the product specification supplied is identical in all respects to the specification that was subjected to the conditions of the test.

Assessment Reports

Test reports relate only to what has been tested and allow very little in the way of variations. Changes to a construction tested will either require further fire tests or an expert opinion in the form of an assessment report undertaken by an experienced assessor as defined within EGOLF Agreement EGA 10. The nature and scope of any variations will largely depend on the specification, size and configuration of the original test specimen.

The assessment process ideally requires discussions between the client and the testing laboratory prior to testing, to agree the client's requirements for the complete product range and establish the optimum test programme, although assessment based on existing test evidence is still possible.

Once the test programme has been successfully completed Warrington Fire is able to provide an opinion in the form of an assessment report that will combine all items of test data into a single document identifying the maximum permitted parameters, or consider any specific changes to the tested specification that the client requires. The assessment report becomes the document that the client will use in support of their test reports.

Assessments consider a wide range of aspects of design, for example with doors the following are typically considered:

- Changes in leaf dimensions (height and width)
- Changes in doorset configurations (single leaf, double leaf, single acting, double acting)
- Glazed aperture sizes and configurations
- Option to use alternative glass types
- Door frame variations (e.g. size, section, material, etc.)
- Changes and additional items of hardware
- Intumescent specification

Assessments reports have a 5 year validation period, after which time they should be returned to Warringtonfire for review.

Again it is the responsibility of the manufacturer/supplier of a product/material to ensure that the product specification supplied is complies in all respects with the specification and parameters identified within the assessment report.

This assessment represents our opinion as to the performance likely to be demonstrated on a fire test, on the basis of the evidence referred to. Warrington Fire express no opinion as to whether the assessment, would be regarded by any Building Control authority as sufficient for that or any other purpose. This assessment is provided to the client for its own purposes and Warrington Fire cannot opine on whether it will be accepted by Building Control authorities or any other third parties for any purpose.

Third Party Product Certification

ISO Guide 65/ISO Guide 67 (System 5) third-party product certification involves, amongst other things, the following procedures to be undertaken. All of these aspects are carried out by and under the full control of the independent third-party product certification body (not the manufacturer/supplier of the product/material):

1 – The certification body, such as Warrington Certification Limited (WCL) carry out an initial quality management system (QMS) audit at the place of manufacture of the product and/or manufacturing site of any critical components used in the manufacture of the product. This is to determine if the processes and procedures are satisfactory.

2 – The certification body carries out an initial factory production control (FPC) audit at the place of manufacture of the product and/or manufacturing site of any critical components used in the manufacture of the product. This is to determine if the technical production processes and procedures are satisfactory.

3 – The certification body selects the necessary product(s)/material(s) that are to be tested in support of the certification process (from the manufacturing production line, the manufacturer's stock or the open market).

4 – The certification body arranges for the selected product(s)/material(s) to be tested at an independent third-party test laboratory. In most cases, the test laboratory that is utilized by the certification body to conduct the necessary testing will hold ISO 17025 accreditation for the testing that is being undertaken. (Note that previous test evidence is not usually acceptable for certification.)

5 – If all aspects of the certification process are found to be satisfactory, the certification body issues certification documentation (complying with/accredited against the requirements of ISO Guide 65).

6 – In most cases, the certification body places a copy of the certification documentation in the public domain (generally in an online directory). This is so that anyone who is handed a copy of the documentation can verify that what they have been provided with is both authentic and valid.
7 – The certification body provides labels that include a "certification mark" (or a licence to use the certification mark) to the manufacturer/supplier. The manufacturer/supplier is able to apply the "certification mark" to each product that they manufacture that is covered by the scope of the certification (as described in the certification documentation). The inclusion of the "certification mark" on a product lets anyone who looks at it know that the product is independently certificated.

8 – The certification body carries out follow up (repeat) QMS and FPC audits at defined intervals (usually a minimum of annually). During these audits the certification body verifies that the aspects of current production (and production that has occurred between this and the previous audit) are identical in all respects to those that were being utilized when the initial audits were conducted and the test samples were selected (i.e. verification that manufacturing methods, processes, raw materials utilized etc are identical).

9 – The certification body arranges for follow up (repeat) testing of product(s)/material(s) at defined intervals. The samples that are subjected to follow up testing are selected by the certification body from the manufacturing production line, the manufacturer's stock or the open market. This follow up testing is conducted to ensure continual compliance of the product(s)/material(s) with the relevant test standard.

10 – If at any point during the certification process any anomalies are found by the certification body that could affect the performance of the product/material when subjected to the relevant test standard(s), this may result in suspension, withdrawal or cancellation of the certification (and also cancellation of the right of the manufacturer/supplier to use the "certification mark" on their products) along with a recall of all product(s)/material(s) that have been sold that are considered to have had their performance affected by the anomaly in question.
Certification provides end users with significantly increased confidence that what is being supplied to them is of an identical specification to the product/material that was tested

This certificated scope represents our opinion as to the performance likely to be demonstrated on a fire test, on the basis of the evidence referred to. The certification body express no opinion as to whether the certificate, would be regarded by any Building Control authority as sufficient for that or any other purpose. This certificate is provided to the client for its own purposes and the certification body cannot opine on whether it will be accepted by Building Control authorities or any other third parties for any purpose.