



GIDEP Says Zero Defects at RCD

By Michael Martin - Special to U.S. Tech

Corona, CA — Of the 8 major U.S. resistor manufacturers, only one, RCD Components Inc., managed to come out unscathed in a recent review of GIDEP Alerts and Problem Advisory's issued over a 10-year period from May 1989 to the present.

GIDEP (Government-Industry Data Exchange Program) is a program founded in 1959 to exchange information between industry and government about non-conforming products and reliability problems. More than 1500 companies and government agencies participate in the program. Even companies that are not members of the GIDEP organization are often quite familiar with the gravity of a GIDEP "ALERT," since it can have a large impact on a manufacturer.

The GIDEP organization itself does not penalize companies that receive Alerts, but such firms can suffer serious consequences due to the possibility of diminished reputation, as well as the possibility of suspension from the Military QPL (Qualified Product List), or even substantial fines and penalties.

RCD Components was the only major U.S. resistor manufacturer to have a flawless record for the period studied. Ohmite came in second place with only one GIDEP citation, followed by Bourms with 4 and IRC with 5. Other companies studied for this report were Allen Bradley, with 6 alerts, Philips (including Mepco), which received 9 alerts, Vishay (including Ultronics), snagging 15 alerts, and Dale (including Techno) with 22 alerts during the period of this study.

In a telephone interview, Jeff Zern, Component Quality Engineer at DESC (Defense Electronics Supply Center), said that the GIDEP program is DESC's fundamental vehicle for channeling information about quality problems to both the military and commercial sectors, and confirmed that three resistor manufacturers have been disqualified or suspended in the past due to problems reported in the GIDEP program. In addition, DESC uses MPCAG (Military Parts Control Advisory Group) as a means of disseminating information specifically to Defense contractors.

Zern characterized the GIDEP program as "very important" to DESC not only as a means of alerting companies about potential problems but also to learn and act on problems which DESC hadn't previously recognized. Mr. Zern commented that it isn't valid to judge the quality of a single supplier solely on their GIDEP track record since Alerts, which may be issued by the manufacturers as well as by their customers, may not be completely accurate and the frequency of occurrence would tend to be skewed towards larger companies.

Mr. Zern declined to comment whether any resistor manufacturers are presently in jeopardy of losing their QPL (Qualified Product List) approval status, but did state that previously disqualified

companies had been able to regain their QPL status after meeting all of the conditions imposed by DESC.

In another interview, Domingo Pichardo, Quality Engineer at AT&T, said that the general quality of resistor products seems to be getting better. "Surface mount technology brought about a new set of problems for our suppliers to overcome, such as tombstoning, solder leaching, and short circuits attributable to dendritic growth. Networks and potentiometers, especially surface mount models, seem to have far more problems than fixed discrete resistors. We're still experiencing reliability problems, particularly in ceramic body networks. The quality of resistors in general is fairly good and in fact quite a bit better than some other products."

When asked whether RCD emphasizes quality as one of its main selling points, Marketing VP Al Arcidy replied, "We've been pointing out to prospective customers for nearly 30 years that our quality is superior to the competition. Unfortunately everyone makes this claim nowadays so it doesn't mean much anymore. We always encourage customers to conduct site visits and perform side-by-side testing since this generally proves our point." Mr. Arcidy added "RCD's outgoing quality level is now measured in PPB (parts per billion) instead of the PPM (parts per million) scale that others use. With less than 1 defect per million pieces it's not hard to see why we don't have many GIDEP Alerts. We're very familiar with that our competitors have but we'd rather sell on our merits not on their faults. Besides, the more attention that our competitors' problems attract, the more likely they are to actually correct them. We like it better when they just pay lip-service to a problem, which I must say they're pretty good at."

RCD's QA Manager, Kerry Woods, attributed the company's success to its unique 'ABZED' program. "RCD has always had an excellent reputation. Our program, although quite involved, isn't so complex when you break it down. Basically, we simply must do whatever it takes to achieve our goal of absolute zero defects, or 'ABZED quality,' a term coined by our President many years ago. ABZED isn't a slogan, it's a culture which is systemic throughout every facet of the operation. We all catch hell from the President if we can't demonstrate continuous improvement! Quality has to be designed in, so engineering and QC work hand-in-hand. Many resistor products are very mature technologies. Like our competitors, RCD has been manufacturing resistors for decades, but I bet we're the only ones that still consider them as 'new' products. Once you consider a product 'old,' it seems that the priority and emphasis are placed elsewhere. We're constantly looking for ways to improve a product whether it has been in production 20 days or 20 years."

Companies interested in participating in the GIDEP program or learning more about it should contact GIDEP Operations Center, P.O. Box 8000, Corona, CA 91718-8000 Ph: 909-273-4677