



## **Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Fuel Standards Program**

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### **Why were new fuel standards developed?**

In the mid-1990s PFI developed an original set of pelletized fuel standards to help bring consistency to the industry. The original standards defined criteria for premium and standard grade pellets and were quickly adopted by industry, PFI members and non-members alike. Over time it became apparent that these standards lacked key components. The grades were too broad, test methods were not defined, there was no specified quality assurance or quality control (QA/QC) practices, and there was no enforcement.

PFI's new standards define criteria for four grades of pelletized fuel and identify standardized methodology for testing each parameter. PFI's QA/QC Program provides an industry wide quality management system for demonstrating compliance with the standards. This program also includes product grading based on a year's worth of testing data, quarterly data evaluation to verify continued compliance, and a proficiency testing program for third party testing laboratories.

### **What is my benefit to being enrolled in the program?**

Your benefits include partnering with appliance manufacturers to ensure happy customers, a reputation for consistent fuel quality, and overall industry confidence that facilitates the growth of the pellet fuels industry. PFI will showcase your commitment to quality through our online registration page, our newsletter, periodic news articles and brochures promoting the program. There will also be a list of compliant pellet manufacturers and testing laboratories on the PFI website.

### **Is there a benefit to being a PFI member enrolled in this program, vs being a non-member enrolled?**

Everyone participating in the program, members OR non-members, will have the same requirements. PFI members do not receive any special benefits over non-members; however, cost of participating is less.

### **Legitimacy as an industry?**

When the pellet fuels industry lobby's congress for legislative actions it is hard to gain consideration if the industry is seen as an unknown. It is not known how many mills exist or how much fuel they produce. The industry has very little control over itself. The standards program adds structure and logistical accountability through the data tracking components. It provides technical data that can be used by the industry to research problems and identify solutions.

### **Why self regulate?**

The pellet fuels industry is just that, a fuels industry. There are already indications at the state level that pellet fuels will become regulated unless the industry finds a way to regulate itself.

### **If I am already a member of PFI am I automatically enrolled in the standards program?**

No, the Fuels Standards program is a separate program, originally initiated and supported by PFI Board Members and other members. Just being a PFI member does not automatically register you for the program.

### **It has been stated that PFI's Standards Program will undergo a year of data collection. What is this first year data collection time period used for?**

During the first year, all participating mill test data will be used to confirm that the numbers in the standards are the best for the whole industry, given the raw materials that are available today. After the first year, the numbers will be reviewed to see if any of the fuel categories need to be adjusted. Once the data is looked at and any adjustments to the standards are made, those will be the numbers we use.

### **Should I wait until after this first year data collection to participate?**

We recommend that everyone participate as soon as possible so that we have a wide selection of fuel data to look at when reviewing the data. If you don't participate the first year, your fuel won't be considered in reviewing the fuel categories before finalizing them.

### **My fuel is already being tested by a third party lab. Can I use their analysis for the standards program?**

The standards program requires all participating third party labs to register with the program. On your registration application, you are required to indicate which of the participating labs you will use.

### **I currently have the PFI logo on my bag. Does this indicate that I am a participant in the standards program?**

The PFI logo currently used on bags simply shows PFI membership. Once enrolled in the program, the manufacturer will receive an interim certification mark to use on their bags which states that the specific mill is a program participant. Once a years' worth of data has been collected, the manufacturer will receive an official certification mark stating the fuel grade and components surrounding it.

### **Why is the bag label important?**

The bag label is important for both retailer and customer acceptance. Consumers need a guarantee of what the label says is in the bag is actually in the bag. The standards need to be clearly indicated and understandable.

### **What prevents a manufacturer from side stepping the standards program?**

Each participant is required to sign a certificate of compliance upon registering for the program. Although this program will not have a “watchdog” visiting manufacturers, we are relying on our belief that PFI is encompassed of dependable, reliable manufacturing facilities who will have the integrity to follow the program which will only benefit them in the long run.

Also, bags will be date stamped and/or numbered by the bagging system to assure time or quantity separation of the samples submitted for QA analysis.

### **What is necessary for the QA/QC document.**

The QA/QC component of the standards program requires a written Quality Control Program for your facility. PFI has created a Quality Control Program template based on MIL-I-45208 which meets the requirements of PFI's QA/QC Program. We strongly recommend using this for your written Quality Control Program. If you already have a written Quality Control Program you may use your current program provided it contains at a minimum all of the components outlined in the template. You can download PFI's MIL-I-45208 Quality Control Program template through the following link:

[Pellet Fuels Institute Quality Program Standard](#)

The QA/QC must be completed in order to get started. It is the first step. Click here to see all of the steps required in order: <http://www.pelletheat.org/2/MillRegistration.html>

### **Where can I find the forms necessary for my QA/QC program?**

QA/QC forms can be found in the MIL I—45208 packet. There are quite a few different forms in this packet. Some will be beneficial for your facility, others will not even be used. Any of these can be copied and reused for your internal tracking.

### **Is on-site testing required?**

All manufacturers are required to have an internal QA/QC program which involves on-site testing. The cost to purchase testing equipment is approximately \$6000 (quoted thru Preiser Scientific).

\*Please note: you cannot have your fuel registered with PFI unless it is tested with one of the registered testing labs (see: <http://www.pelletheat.org/2/quality.html#labs>).

### **What are the on site testing methods (ASTM) that I need to use?**

The on-site testing does not require the manufacturer to use specific ASTM methods. However, the standards document does list the required ASTM testing methods for the program that the testing labs must follow. If the manufacturer chooses to use these ASTM methods, they can be purchased at [www.astm.com](http://www.astm.com) and are approximately \$30 each test.

## **What are the Registration Fees for Standards Program?**

- Mill Participation/Registration Fees

First Year:       Members: \$1,000  
                      Non-members: \$2,500

Additionally, if you operate more than one production location you can register each additional production location for \$750 if you are a PFI member and \$1,500 for non-members, provided that they are registered at the same time.

Second year and beyond:       Members: \$400  
  Non-members: \$1,200

Additionally, if you operate more than one production location you can register each additional production location for \$300 if you are a PFI member or for \$600 if you are a non-member, provided that they are registered at the same time.

## **How often will we send samples to the outside testing lab?**

The program requires testing one 40lb bag per 1000 tons produced, but not less than one sample per quarter. Bags will be date stamped and/or numbered by the bagging system to assure time or quantity separation of the samples submitted for QA analysis.

## **What is the sample amount?**

One 40-lb. bag of pellets taken directly from bagging operations and sent to the outside testing lab.

## **What is the cost each time?**

The cost to test the product would be quoted directly from the outside testing lab that the manufacturer chooses to use. Along with the cost of testing, there would also be the additional cost of shipping each sample to the testing lab.