



REGULATORY

Mandatory Quality Certification for Aluminium Products: An Analysis of the 2026 QCO issued by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry

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The Indian aluminium sector has witnessed a significant regulatory transformation with the issuance of the Aluminium and Aluminium Alloy Products (Quality Control) Order, 2026, by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade. Promulgated on March 11, 2026, and published in the Extraordinary Gazette of India on March 13, 2026, this legislative instrument represents a decisive step towards ensuring product quality, consumer safety, and standardization in a critical manufacturing sector. The Order, issued under Section 16 of the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016, reflects the Central Government's exercise of statutory authority to mandate compulsory certification after due consultation with the Bureau of Indian Standards.

The legal foundation of this regulatory intervention derives explicitly from the enabling provisions of the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016, specifically Section 16, which empowers the Central Government to mandate the use of Standard Marks on goods and articles when deemed necessary or expedient in public interest. This statutory framework ensures that the Order operates within the constitutional bounds of delegated legislation, providing both legitimacy and enforceability to the quality control measures herein prescribed. The Order assumes the character of subordinate legislation, carrying the force of law and attracting penal consequences for non-compliance under the parent Act.

A significant aspect of this regulatory instrument is its supersession of the predecessor legislation, namely the Aluminium and Aluminium Alloy Products (Quality Control) Order, 2025. This legislative substitution operates prospectively, with an explicit savings clause preserving the validity of actions taken or omitted to be done under the erstwhile regime prior to the new Order's commencement. Such transitional provisions ensure legal continuity while enabling regulatory upgradation, preventing any vacuum in enforcement during the interregnum between the two legislative instruments.

The substantive core of the Order resides in Section 2, which mandates compulsory use of the Standard Mark for seventeen distinct categories of aluminium and aluminium alloy products. These products encompass a diverse spectrum ranging from irrigation tubes and pharmaceutical packaging foils to aerospace forging stocks and electrical application materials. Each product category is mapped to specific Indian Standards, requiring manufacturers and importers to ensure conformity with the technical specifications therein. The Standard Mark must be affixed under a valid license from the Bureau of Indian Standards, obtained in accordance with Scheme-I of Schedule-II to the Bureau of Indian Standards (Conformity Assessment) Regulations, 2018. This regulatory cross-referencing creates an integrated compliance framework, linking the Order to the broader conformity assessment infrastructure established under BIS regulations.

The Order demonstrates considerable sensitivity towards the operational realities of different enterprise categories through its differentiated implementation timeline. While the obligation to conform applies universally, the dates of implementation vary based on enterprise classification under the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Act, 2006. Micro enterprises are afforded the longest compliance runway, with implementation dates specified in Column 7 of the appended Table, while small enterprises must comply by dates specified in Column 6. Other enterprises, including medium and large entities, face the most immediate compliance obligations as per Column 5. This staggered approach acknowledges the differential capacity of enterprises to adapt to regulatory changes, particularly the resource constraints that characterise smaller business entities. For several product categories, including aluminium alloy tubes for irrigation, EC grade aluminium rods, pharmaceutical packaging foils, aluminium composite panels, corrugated sheets, and aerospace forging stocks, compliance is immediate across all enterprise categories.

The regulatory architecture incorporates carefully calibrated exemptions designed to balance quality control objectives with economic pragmatism. Goods manufactured domestically exclusively for export purposes stand exempted from the Order's applicability, recognising that export markets operate under diverse regulatory regimes and that Indian manufacturers must retain flexibility to meet foreign specifications. This exemption aligns with broader policy objectives of promoting manufacturing exports without compromising domestic consumer protection. Additionally, the Order accommodates research and development activities through a conditional exemption for imports up to two hundred kilograms annually by manufacturers of aluminium products. This R&D exemption is circumscribed by stringent safeguards: such imported goods cannot be commercially traded and must be disposed of as scrap, while manufacturers must maintain careful year-wise records and submit authenticated documentation to the Central Government. These conditions prevent regulatory arbitrage while encouraging innovation through access to international materials for experimental purposes.

The institutional framework for enforcement and certification is unambiguously vested in the Bureau of Indian Standards, designated as the certifying and enforcing authority for all goods and articles specified in the Order. This

centralisation of regulatory oversight ensures consistency in application, eliminates jurisdictional ambiguity, and uses BIS's technical expertise in standardisation and conformity assessment. The Bureau's role encompasses both the grant of licenses for Standard Mark usage and the surveillance necessary to detect and address non-compliance, creating a comprehensive regulatory ecosystem.

Penal provisions under Section 4 of the Order ensure deterrent effect through the incorporation by reference of the penal framework established under the Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016. Any contravention of the Order's provisions attracts punishment under the parent Act, thereby subjecting violators to the full range of sanctions including monetary penalties and potential imprisonment as prescribed therein.

The seventeen product categories subjected to compulsory certification reflect strategic selection based on application criticality and consumer exposure. The coverage includes aluminium alloy tubes for irrigation purposes in both welded and extruded variants, addressing agricultural infrastructure needs. EC grade aluminium rods produced through continuous casting and rolling processes are included, targeting electrical conductivity applications. Pharmaceutical packaging foils are encompassed, recognising the direct implications for drug safety and efficacy. Aluminium composite panels, widely used in construction and architectural applications, are brought within the regulatory net alongside corrugated aluminium sheets for roofing and cladding. The aerospace sector is specifically addressed through the inclusion of aluminium alloy forging stock and forgings for Alloy 24345 applications, where material failure could have catastrophic consequences. General engineering applications are extensively covered through wrought aluminium and aluminium alloy bars, rods, sections, plates, sheets, strips, wire, and rivet stock. Electrical applications receive dedicated attention through specific standards for wrought aluminium wire and comprehensive coverage of bars, rods, tubes, sections, plates, and sheets for electrical purposes. Consumer goods are not overlooked, with wrought aluminium and aluminium alloys for utensil manufacture included in the mandatory certification regime.

A critical interpretative provision contained in the note appended to the Table clarifies that the latest version of Indian Standards, including amendments notified by the Bureau of Indian Standards from time to time, shall apply for purposes of the Order. This dynamic incorporation mechanism ensures that the regulatory framework remains current with technological advancements and evolving safety requirements without necessitating frequent legislative amendments. Stakeholders must therefore monitor BIS notifications continuously to ensure compliance with the most recent standard specifications.

The Order's entry into force upon publication in the Official Gazette on March 13, 2026, establishes immediate legal effect, though the staggered implementation dates for various product categories create a phased operational reality. Enterprises must navigate this temporal complexity with precision, ensuring that compliance obligations are met within the specified windows to avoid exposure to penal consequences. The immediate effect provisions for certain critical products, contrasted with the extended timelines for general engineering applications, reflect risk-based regulatory prioritisation.

The Aluminium and Aluminium Alloy Products (Quality Control) Order, 2026, represents a comprehensive regulatory intervention that substantially strengthens quality assurance in a sector of significant economic and strategic importance. By mandating BIS certification across seventeen product categories while accommodating the capacities of micro and small enterprises through phased implementation, the Order achieves a balance between consumer protection and business facilitation. The exemptions for export-oriented production and research and development imports demonstrate regulatory sophistication, preventing unnecessary constraints on economic activities that do not compromise domestic consumer interests. The centralisation of certification and enforcement authority in the Bureau of Indian Standards ensures professional oversight, while the integration of penal consequences under the BIS Act provides adequate deterrence against non-compliance. As the aluminium sector adapts to these mandatory requirements, the Order is poised to enhance product quality, bolster consumer confidence, and align Indian manufacturing practices with international standards, ultimately contributing to the broader objectives of quality infrastructure development and ease of doing business in a regulated environment. Stakeholders across the manufacturing, import, and distribution chains must promptly assess their compliance obligations and initiate the necessary conformity assessment procedures to ensure seamless operations under this enhanced regulatory framework.

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