

# SOLD SECURE ATTACK TESTING

It sometimes seems that a lot of locksmiths don't fully understand the benefits of selling Sold Secure Approved Products. Or even know what's involved in some of the tests. To try to show more of Sold Secure's testing I went along to a recent annual audit of an Approved Product and met Guy McCaffery.

Before the test we had a chat about Sold Secure testing and what it involves. The tests are based on time and tools with the product being tested being expected to exceed the time allowed. Obviously the higher the Grade the better the product has to be to meet it. Guy said that he'd had many products that were way below what was expected, often to the surprise of the manufacturer, particularly with regard to bicycle locks.

Guy's job also includes advising on ways of improving products so they meet the relevant standard. This might include advice on the type of material to use or what lock might be best suited to the application.

Products to be tested are submitted in all their variations along with technical drawings for Guy to examine before testing commences. Not that burglars are renowned for looking at plans – they're far more likely to buy one to strip down – but it does allow Guy to really study the construction and identify weak spots so he can plan his attack methods.

He told me that all Sold Secure Approved Products have to undergo an annual audit to keep their accreditation and, if they miss one, they lose their rating. Audits are less involved than the initial full approval test, because they don't include the drawings, but the actual physical testing is the same.

To get around the any concerns of manufacturers submitting products that have been modified specifically to meet the test Sold Secure can, if they see the need, buy a product to test off a retailer's shelf. That way they know it's a genuine product. This could be essential if a product that has approval is seen to be vulnerable to a particular attack.

Jeremy Cassady, of Securikey, had bravely agreed to let me watch the audit of the Mini Vault range of safes. The safes were being tested to Sold Secure SS304 Silver as well as EN14450 S2 rating. What surprised me when I was talking to them both was how much more stringent the Sold Secure test is. The EN allows for a specific set of tools and the better the tool the shorter the time allowed. For example using a chisel and a hammer means an attack time of two and a half minutes whereas the Sold Secure test is pretty much any tool combination up to 5 minutes to meet Silver and 10 minutes for Gold. I watched Guy using a crowbar with 2 four feet extensions on the safes to try and force the doors open, something I doubt is in the EN testing given what I read.

The only attack method not included with Sold Secure Gold that is within EN14450 S2 is an angle grinder. But having seen the EN test criteria it isn't used as an angle grinder but to simulate an axe attack! How that works is beyond me – if it's a grinder get grinding, don't pretend it's something else! Having said that Guy did demonstrate an angle grinder attack on the double skinned Mini Vault FR and even after 10 minutes, 2 dead batteries, 4 angle grinder cutting discs and a serious assault with a sledge hammer on the inner body he still hadn't got in so I'd say it may well have passed anyway, wouldn't you?



Just to show what's involved in the Gold Level test Guy demonstrated an angle grinder attack - as it happens the double skinned Mini Vault Gold FR may well have passed this particular part of the higher level test

Because EN14450 requires the locks to be certificated to EN1300 Guy doesn't need to test the locks - as long as the correct certification is supplied. However he told me that if they're not certified he has a range of attack



If in doubt, give it a clout!

methods up his sleeve!

Jeremy told me he thinks Sold Secure Silver is twice as hard to pass as EN14450 S2 based on the time factors allowed. Personally I applaud him for not just following the herd and making a product that just passes the Standard but actively adding features to make the safes more secure. Developments on the Mini Vault since Sold Secure have included extra anti-drill protection for the boltwork and improvements to the hinges against prying, both due to previous test failures because of the test being so stringent.

Testing safes with Sold Secure is cheaper than a UKAS accredited test house – for example there's no need for anyone to quality assure the factory that produced it because the testing is on the product not on paperwork. However I think it's safe to say that being cheaper doesn't make it easier to pass the test.

Having seen the testing I can vouch for the fact they are more stringent than the comparative EN tests but the sad thing is the insurance companies don't seem to have realised what's involved and how much more likely to resist an attack a Silver or Gold safe is. Double the time allowed and no restriction on tools must ensure a safe that will stand up to more of a physical attack by a burglar and protect the insured valuables for much longer.

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Adding some extension pieces increases the force dramatically

As you will see from the pictures the attacks are brutal – Guy pulls no punches (if you'll pardon the pun!) and has lots of tricks up his sleeve. The sorts of tricks the burglar might pull like drilling the hinge to weaken it before trying to force it. Before he starts the test he lines up the necessary tools so that he's not wasting time going to get anything. Boxes of drills, lump hammers, chisels and crow bars are all easily to hand.

Being a test to Silver level the drills were all HSS rather than the Gold level's TCT drill attack. Guy tested all the relevant points that might be vulnerable. This included drilling in from the corner to reach the bolts rather than from the side because he already knows there was a

hardened plate there. Jeremy told me that he's had to add hardened plates so that they butted up in the corner on the larger sizes because the bolts were more vulnerable. On the smaller sizes the boltwork just distorts when forced – as you'll see from the picture - but the larger safes need extra protection.

You'll also see from the pictures that Guy drills into the edge of the door for more purchase and better leverage for the crowbar something I doubt there is time for under EN14450. It was certainly interesting standing with Jeremy watching the time ticking away and how Guy still had the same time to go as he'd had when the EN test time



This picture shows how the boltwork had distorted when being forced back and defeated Guy's attack



The double skinned Mini Vault FR safe after Guy had finished his attacks. The door would still open!

was reached.

All in all a very revealing visit. Was I impressed? Definitely! We've been selling the Mini Vault at Holdfast for many years and, having seen the brutality of the attacks I've got a lot more confidence in their ability to withstand a burglary attack.

Jeremy had a discussion with Guy about what else was needed to achieve SS304 Gold so who knows we may see more improvements to the range and more testing!

I'm planning a return visit to watch a cylinder test in the near future to see how difficult Sold Secure SS312