

## CCCA: 1 year later, flow of sub-par cables to U.S. continues; UL reports measures to counter the problem

There was both good news and bad news to report regarding the flow of offshore-manufactured telecom cable to North America. The bad news is that the Communications Cable and Connectivity Association, Inc. (CCCA) reported at IWCS that, a year after its initial field-test report found that eight of nine randomly selected samples from Asia failed to meet the minimum requirements for fire safety, its follow-up field test showed that the U.S. cable marketplace continues to receive sub-standard cables. The good news, however, also reported at IWCS, is that UL announced a series of steps it plans to take in response to that situation.

Steve Galan, General Manager of UL's Wire and Cable Services Strategic Business Unit, outlined three specific measures: a market surveillance program that will test cables obtained anonymously through cable distributors; the "fingerprinting" of different cable constructions from cable manufacturers so that a test matrix can be developed; and sophisticated holographic labeling that will be required for all telecom cable categories, which includes the boxes that the cables come in. Exact dates for when these efforts will take effect have not been set yet, but it will be sometime in 2010, he said. He warned that, "no one of these measures is a silver bullet," but collectively, along with efforts by UL and CCCA to educate the industry and its customers, it will become more difficult for suppliers of such cables to get sub-standard product through.

Specifically, UL will initiate a market surveillance program, to be a permanent part of its Follow-Up Services (FUS), said Galan, who noted that his organization has had considerable success with review programs for decorative lighting and flexible cord. This program will allow for a wide range of sample selection, including ones obtained anonymously from distributors, he said. Further, instead of a long wait for a full-fledged flame test to be conducted, small samples can now be taken to determine if the ingredients are "the good stuff," and if it's not, to arrange for a complete test, he said. The program will be global in scope, targeting not just Asia, with the goal being over time "to sample everybody," he said.

UL will also build a database of different cable constructions for companies that have tested and approved cables for plenum, riser and vertical tray applications to develop a test matrix by which it can be determine whether they are making the cables properly, Galan said. If a company has been found to have changed its construction or materials, UL would take appropriate action that could include delisting of the particular cable, and if it is seen as an endemic problem, a complete delisting.

Finally, Galan said that UL's plans go beyond the cables themselves, requiring holographic labeling for the boxes that all telecom cables come in. He noted that this step is important as four of eight samples of cables had come in boxes that did not bear the appropriate mark. The technolo-

gy that goes into the hologram, such as those shown in the below photo, would be very difficult to duplicate, he said.

Galan said that more details will be presented in a UL bulletin that likely will go out in December. He added that there will also be a review of the items in that bulletin at a UL meeting likely to be held in either January or February. Galan can be contacted at [steven.a.galan@us.ul.com](mailto:steven.a.galan@us.ul.com).

The CCCA's 2009 report found that six of the eight samples failed to meet the minimum NFPA code requirements for low flame spread and/or smoke generation for installation in commercial buildings, schools and multi-tenant resi-



*Samples of holograms that UL plans to require be placed on boxes containing telecom cables.*

dences. It noted the following details: All of the failing samples exhibited severe failures, indicating an unacceptable public safety hazard still exists. In 2008, its initial report found that eight out of nine randomly selected samples failed to meet the minimum requirements for fire safety. Five of the eight samples tested this year were chosen from companies whose products failed the 2008 fire safety tests. Four out of the five repeat companies' samples failed the fire safety tests for a second year in a row.

CCCA Executive Director Frank Peri, whose organization represents communication cable makers and distributors who have to compete with lower-priced cables that may be under-code, said that he sees the story going forward from this point as a positive one, an example of what cooperative efforts can do. "The industry, as a whole, is going to be a lot better off," he said.

CCCA's 2009 report also noted that three of the eight samples marked as meeting the minimum electrical performance required by industry standards for Cat. 5e and 6 cables failed to do so. Peri, who had been criticized by some people last year for not releasing the names of the distributors whose samples had failed, said that he chose not to do that because "disclosing names offers little value because these are easily changed and noncompliant cable will still be sold under a new banner."

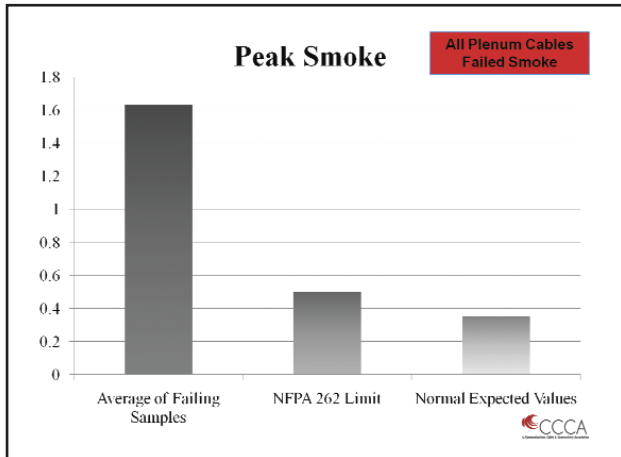


Chart from CCCA showing results for smoke tests for cables it had tested in 2009.

Rather, Peri said, he wants to focus on the measures that will bring about the desired results, and he is satisfied that the steps that UL has announced represent a good start.

Peri insisted that UL should not be seen as the lone party in this matter, and that the industry as a whole has to educate distributors, the people who spec cable, those people who install it and those who inspect it to make sure they understand how potentially bad cable can be detected and prevented.

"I see these as being very positive steps," said CCCA Chairman Kevin Ressler, director of business development for Tyco Electronics. "These are very progressive measures and we're encouraged to see it."

Also supporting the news was CCCA Secretary Pete Lockhart, vice president emerging technologies, Anixter. "Obviously Anixter supports any effort to stop the flow of inferior cables into the U.S. that represent a fire or safety hazard to consumers," he said, adding that such cables "also present risks to companies' networks. We have tested off-shore data cables in our lab over the years which claim category performance, but which fail to meet these specified standards."

Peri welcomes comments at [fperi@cccassoc.org](mailto:fperi@cccassoc.org).

## Chinese company to have 2 new rod lines at its Jiangsu Province plant

China's Zenith Steel (Changzhou Zhongtian Iron & Steel) has signed multiple contracts for two rod outlets for the company's new rod mills in Changzhou.

A press release from Siemens, which is supplying the rod outlet equipment, said that the contracts are valued at more than US\$15 million. The project calls for each rod outlet to have the capability to produce plain rod (5.5 mm to 20 mm) for use for cold heading steel, spring steel, welding wire, bearing steel, tire cord and PC strand steel grades. Once the new equipment is installed, the mills for the privately owned, midsized steelmaker will produce up to 150 tons per hour on each line, it said.

The release said that the contract includes a four stand pre-finishing mill (PFM) arrangement, with two-stand 300 horizontal/vertical PFM and a two-stand 230 Vee PFM; a 10-stand, 230/160 Vee No Twist Mill (NTM), guides for the PFM and NTM, snap shears, side loopers, water boxes, troughs, pinch rolls, laying heads, Stelmor conveyor, two-arm mandrel reform stations and compactors. It also includes site supervision and services during the installation.

Delivery is expected in mid-2010 for the first rod outlet and the third quarter 2010 for the second, the release said.

## Prysmian launches first extra-high power cable plant in the U.S.

Prysmian Cables & Systems announced that its new U.S. extra-high-voltage power cable plant in Abbeville, South Carolina, represents the first such production site in North America, which until now has had to import this technology.

The approximately US\$48 million investment will give Prysmian an important competitive advantage in the North American high-voltage cables and systems market, which is expected to see "major investment to modernize power transmission networks and exploit renewable energy," a press release at its website said.

The plant, the release said, consists of a Vertical Continuous Vulcanization (VCV) process housed in a 373-foot-tall tower. Prysmian has medium- and low-voltage power cable manufacturing facilities in Abbeville, and the new plant further reinforces the product range available to Prysmian's customers, which include North America's major utility companies. In 2008 North America represented 11.8% of the Prysmian Group's total sales, with over 800 people employed in four production facilities: two in the U.S. (Abbeville and Lexington, S.C.) and two in Canada (St. Jean, Québec, and Prescott, Ontario).

The release cited other Prysmian projects in North America, such as Trans Bay Cable, a high-voltage submarine power link that will allow the city of San Francisco to access more environmentally friendly energy, and the Neptune project, completed in 2007, for a submarine transmission cable that delivers energy to New York City from New Jersey.

"The investment in the U.S. represents a further step forward in Prysmian's investment plans in the high-tech, high added-value sector of high voltage submarine and underground cables," the release said. It noted that in recent years, Prysmian has made significant investments to increase its production capacity in markets with the greatest growth potential. These include China, where the construction of 24,000 km of new power transmission lines has been announced, and Europe, where there is strong impetus from the need to develop network interconnectors and the development of renewable energy from wind farms that require connecting to the traditional transmission networks, it said.

Apart from the new Abbeville plant, Prysmian has 14 other facilities for high-voltage cables and systems, which are located in France, Finland, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Spain, Turkey, U.K., Indonesia, Malaysia and China.