

Serious Fire Safety Concerns with Many Communications Cables from Offshore Manufacturers ... and what you should know.

The incidence of offshore-manufactured communications cable products which fail to meet industry fire safety requirements continues to plague the Structured Cabling industry in the North American (NA) market.



As a user of building communications cables, you should be aware that some commercially available cable products are not compliant to minimum NFPA (National Fire Protection Association) National Electric Code (NEC) fire safety standards, even though they may display the listing mark of a major, independent testing organization. In addition, some cable products also fail to meet minimum standards for physical and electrical performance, which can impair network performance and in some cases result in network failures and lost productivity. In other words, these cables offer only the illusion of quality, electrical performance, and fire safety.

The Communications Cable & Connectivity Association (CCCA) has been concerned about this problem which affects the entire Structured Cabling industry and undermines the codes and standards based integrity of the NA market. In 2008, and again in 2009, the CCCA conducted quality testing of randomly selected communication cable samples purchased from NA distribution, from manufacturers not widely known. Tests were conducted by a well recognized independent testing agency familiar with communications cable electrical and fire performance standards and testing. Many of the samples failed minimum flame spread and smoke requirements, showing a serious public safety hazard. CCCA is working with the major independent testing agencies to address this issue, to promote high-quality, high-performance products in the marketplace, for the betterment of the industry.



Based on these findings, it is evident that some manufacturers are continuing to substitute inferior materials and circumvent the quality assurance practices of independent testing agencies. Consequently, there is a significant amount of imported cable currently in inventory that is questionable, at best. If ever there was a time to heed "Caveat Emptor" ... "Let the buyer beware" ... that time is now.

Our recommendation is to purchase cable from known, reputable, quality-focused manufacturers.