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Next generation IT Infrastructures

AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON CONTENT OF NEW INSTALLATION STANDARDS by Mike Gilmore, Technical Director of the FIA for Networking+ (June 2008)

Q4, 2008 will see the ratification of two important new standards:

- EN 50174-1:2008 Information technology - Cabling installation - Installation Specification and quality assurance
- EN 50174-2:2008 Information technology - Cabling installation - Installation planning and practices inside buildings

The final voting drafts have now been prepared and will be circulated in the next two months. These documents are a significant revision of the documents first published in 2000. Based on the format of BS 6701:2004, EN 50174-1 and EN 50174-2 not only introduce a substantive change in their list of requirements and recommendations but also present them in a structured way - making it easy to define responsibilities for both installers and premises owners.

One of the most relevant changes in EN 50174-1 is the development of a concept of infrastructure complexity as a means of defining the scale or coverage of specific activities. The most identifiable change is the inclusion of an Annex containing requirements and recommendations for polarity maintenance for multi-fibre installations. The recommendation for array connectivity (parallel optics solutions) differs from that in FIA-TSD-2000-3-3 and the FIA document will soon be amended to reference the new European standards.

While most of the changes to EN 50174-1 are quite subtle, EN 50174-2 has received a massive makeover. Often criticised, even by the standards-makers themselves, for a lack of clear requirements and apparent technical inconsistencies, the structure and content of EN 50174-2:2000 has been totally re-worked and re-engineered. EN 50174-2:2008 now contains three principle clauses against which conformance is assessed. The first is entitled "Requirements for planning installations...", the second: "Requirements for installation..." and the third: "Segregation of metallic information technology cabling and mains power cabling". For the optical fibre community the first two contain the real changes but for the world of "copper" cabling the third has been the most hard fought. These three sections represent the general requirements for all installations but there will be additional clauses for "offices", "industrial premises", "homes" and "data centres" which contain modified requirements that are applicable to the particular premises types. The 2008 edition of EN 50174-2 will contain the "offices" and "industrial premises" clauses and a future amendment will contain the other two.

What should not be underestimated is the amount of effort that has been expended in the production of the new standards. This is primarily due to the fact that their use is mandatory from the (BS) EN 50173 series of structured cabling standards. As a result, the main cabling system suppliers have become heavily engaged to ensure that their own recommended practices are included (or dropped). This is expected to result in simplified training solutions and easier routes to supplier approval. That being said, it should be remembered that the EN 50174 series applies to all telecommunications/IT cabling - not just structured cabling.

Following the successful voting of EN 50174-1 and -2, BSI will publish the UK versions - unchanged. The impact of these standards will be felt in a number of areas. Once the ENs are approved, the UK will have to revise the contents of BS 6701 to remove any elements that are duplicated. Preliminary work is now underway within BSI to make these changes - these changes will also require the revision or withdrawal of BIP 0007 which the FIA and ECA sponsored.

For the FIA, the detailed changes to EN 50174-1 and EN 50174-2 will be reflected by amendments to the FIA Approved Installers Database (AID) that links directly to the FIA Approved installer Scheme. This provides FIA Approved Installers with a unique advance opportunity to obtain understand and apply full compliance to the new standards.

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Biography

As the Technical and Standards Director of the UK Fibreoptic Industry Association, Mike is heavily involved in the development of training and competence standards for the fibre installation industry and sets down policy in this area. In addition he chairs the audit and arbitration committees for the FIA. His book "Fibre optic cabling; theory design and installation practice" published in 1991 remains a reference for both experts and entrants into this field.

Mike also initiated the establishment of the Telecommunications Infrastructure Advisory Board (TIA-B) along with the relevant directors of its other host organisations CMA and ECA-ITEC.

In the UK, Mike is Chairman of TCT/7, the BSI Technical Committee responsible for the three panels on telecommunication cabling. He also chairs two of these panels (TCT7/-/1 and TCT7/-/3) and is Secretary of TCT7/-/2. TCT7/-/1 and TCT7/-/2 act to assist development of European and international standards for the design and installation of telecommunications cabling respectively. TCT7/-/2 also manages the implementation of these standards in the UK, where necessary producing supporting national standards.

Mike is involved in CENELEC TC215 - as Convenor of Working Group 1 and Secretary of Working Group 2. These committees are responsible for the development of an integrated series of standards for the design and installation of telecommunications cabling in a range of premises. In 2008 he led the ETSI STF362 on energy efficiency in broadband deployment resulting in the ETSI TS 105174 series documents, allowing Mike to assist in a new TC215 activity covering data centre facilities and infrastructures (monitored in the UK by BSI TCT7/-/3).

At international level, Mike is Convenor of the Cabling Implementation Task Group (CITG) within ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3. This group is responsible for the strategic management of the international standards covering the specification, QA, installation, administration, operation, maintenance and repair of generic cabling. This work supports all the cabling design standards produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 including ISO/IEC 11801, ISO/IEC 15018, ISO/IEC 24764 and ISO/IEC 24702 for industrial premises produced by ISO/IEC JTC1 SC25 WG3 IPTG (also convened by Mike Gilmore).

Mike is a regular speaker at seminars and conferences in all five continents. He has provided the keynote address and opening presentation in many conferences in the UK, Germany and the Netherlands. His seminars, providing regular updates on the progression of cabling standards are particularly well attended and are operating in the UK and continental Europe.



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