Non-Compliant and Counterfeit Cable

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On Behalf of CCCA
(Communications Cable & Connectivity Association)
Communications Cable & Connectivity Association

• Non-profit association addressing quality & performance, safety, environmental impact and other key issues regarding communications infrastructure.

• Members include leading manufacturers of cable and connectivity products, distributors and material suppliers.
• Goal: All communications cable products sold in the U.S. *comply* with applicable fire safety codes, transmission standards … and the law!

• Mission: Education
Codes and Standards Intensive Industry

“Listed”
Life Safety
Mandatory

“Verified”
Transmission
Voluntary
800.179 Communications Wires and Cables

“Communications wires and cables shall be listed in accordance with 800.179(A) through (I) and marked in accordance with Table 800.179. Conductors in communications cables, other than in a coaxial cable, shall be copper.”

CMP - Communications Plenum
CMR - Communications Riser
CM - Communications General Purpose
Safety Listing

“Equipment, materials, or services included in a list published by an organization that is acceptable to the authority having jurisdiction …”

Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratories (NRTLS)

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The Reality Is...

- People want a “bargain”
- There are unscrupulous manufacturers out there
- Making Code and Standard compliant product is expensive
- It’s “easy” to fake compliance
- Not everyone knows the signs of non-compliant product
Examining Compliance of:

1. Communications Data / LAN Cables
2. Copper Patch Cords
3. Fiber Optic Jumpers
4. Fiber Optic Assemblies
What we’ve found:
Packaging and/or cable showing *unauthorized* listing agency Certification Marks

- Cable Listing Mark is considered *counterfeit*
- Cable may not be code compliant
- May have been listed at one time but no longer compliant (removed)
How to tell if marks are counterfeit?

Packaging and/or cable shows UL symbol on package or cable but package does **not** have UL holographic label

- **Every Box** of UL Listed Cable **requires** a Holographic Label
- If no label, cable may be **non-compliant to NEC®**
- Often deceptively advertised and marketed as fully compliant
- Misleading and false claims, e.g.
  - “Plenum rated”
  - “Plenum cable”
  - “Plenum approved”
Another problem:

Packaging and/or cable shows UL or ETL marks, including holographic label (UL) but *does not meet* requirements of codes and standards

- Cable is **non-compliant**
- Not manufactured with materials needed to pass flame spread and smoke generation limits
- May have significant failure in fire performance testing – life safety risk
UL Public Notices

UL warns of communication cable with unauthorized reference to UL

“This cable does not comply with the standard for safety for the United States and Canada, and is not authorized to bear the UL Mark or reference UL.”
UL Public Notices

• There are currently 16 public notices regarding non-compliant and/or counterfeit communication cable
Where do I get more Information?

• Visit UL or Intertek (ETL) Web sites
• Both sites are searchable for listing information by company name
CableCheck™ App

• For use as a field-screening tool with UL listed cables
  – Type in the “E” file number printed on the cable jacket

• Available from the App Store and Google Play.
Other Clues Regarding Non-Compliant Cable

- Poor cable design and/or quality control
- Poor packaging and problems with cable payout – imitation of Reelex™ wind
Additional Things To Be Wary Of

• Unfamiliar brands from unknown manufacturers

• Only available from online vendors
  - Poor English on company website

• No information or hidden information on factory location or country of origin
Counterfeit Cable Hiding in Plain Sight

• Copper Clad Aluminum (CCA) Conductors
• Not allowed for communication cables
• Would never be Listed by any listing agency
• Many sites selling this cable refer to it as “cost effective”
Real Encounters with Non-Compliant Cables

NYC Case study Video
CCCA Market Surveillance and Testing Program

- Samples from Market – CMP Plenum-rated Cables
- Independent / Third Party testing
- NFPA 262 (Steiner Tunnel)
  - Flame Spread
  - Smoke
Initial Round of Tests

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The latest round of testing

- New Steiner Tunnel Video
Liability for Installation of Non-Compliant Cable

• Installers have a legal responsibility (a duty of care) to ensure the products they install are compliant to local building codes.

• “...a duty of care is a legal obligation which is imposed on an individual requiring adherence to a standard of reasonable care while performing any acts that could foreseeably harm others.”

• Liability exists whether or not the installer actually knows (or verifies) the product is non-compliant.

Liability for Installation of Non-Compliant Cable

• Consequences for the installation of non-compliant cable – building code violations:
  – Vary by state but can include fines and/or imprisonment for building code violation. Some states impose fines for each day the code violation exists.
  – Certificate of Occupancy may not be issued to building owner/tenant
Liability for Installation of Non-Compliant Cable

• Possible Civil Liability
  – Negligence – liability for additional damage caused by fire
  – Fraud – possibility of additional damages, including punitive damages
  – Breach of Contract and Warranty
What CCCA is Doing

- Collaborating with UL on compliance and quality assurance procedures
- Communications, training, education, tools for industry and end-users
- Collaborating with & training global customs and law enforcement to protect member brands and trademarks.
- Ongoing surveillance and testing
Webcasts on CCCAssoc.org

Part 1  How Big is the Problem? – CCCA
Part 2  Avoiding Liability – Legal Perspective
Part 3  UL Labels and Marks - UL

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Conference Presentations
U.S. and International – large and small
What You Can Do to Protect Your Company, Your Customers and the Public!

• Long term due diligence is vital.
• Industry media and educational events
• UL and Intertek public notices
• www.CCCAssoc.org
• CableCheck™ app
• Buy known brands
• If unknown brand, require written proof of listing or verification
What To Watch Out For:

- Very low price – especially for CMP rated product
- Unknown brand names with no information on factory location or country of origin
- Suspicious advertising language – poor English
- Packaging and/or cable with NO UL or third-party Mark
- Copper clad aluminum (CCA) conductors
What to Look For:

✓ Recognizable Manufacturer and Factory Location
✓ Reputable Vendor
✓ Industry Consistent Cost
✓ Listing Marks from UL or Intertek and listing information on their web site
✓ Quality packaging and smooth payout
Thanks for Listening!

White papers, articles, notices, webcasts, etc. can be found at:

CCCAssoc.org

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