



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

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AGREEMENT IS REACHED ON CONTENT OF NEW INSTALLATION STANDARDS

by

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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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