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The Fibreoptic Industry Association (FIA) was formed in the early 1990's as a trade association to which any organization or individual involved with the production, supply or installation of optical fibre products is able to subscribe. As such the FIA welcomes start-up companies as well as well-established players in the market. The aim of the FIA is to provide a focus for both suppliers and users in the fibre optic industry in order to ensure the quality and reliability of product provision, cabling design, installation practice and methods of training.

The overall objectives of the FIA can be summarised as follows:

- to promote an awareness of the benefits and applications of fibre optic technology;
- to promote an awareness of the existence of a professional fibre optics industry fully capable of meeting the needs of users, so benefiting both suppliers and their customers;
- to promote and adopt standards to which professional participants within the fibre optic industry should be expected to adhere;
- to provide a central source for information on wide ranging aspects of the fibre optic industry;
- to provide a single voice to promote and represent the interests of the industry obtained by consensus and debate amongst FIA members;
- to develop and promote codes of practice within the industry - both operational and ethical - to which members will be expected to adhere and thus offer an assurance that the highest quality of service will be provided.

The FIA has been involved in the development of national standards for over ten years and has also been publishing its own, highly regarded, Technical Support Documents. Before reviewing the information contained with the FIA TSDs it is opportune to review the broader service offered by the the Fibreoptic Industry Association.

The FIA provides four principal services in support of users and suppliers alike. These are the Approved Installer Scheme, the Approved Training Provider Scheme, the Arbitration Service and the Audit Service.

Although membership of the FIA is open to all, the **Approved Installer Scheme** was designed to differentiate those installers of optical fibre cabling that had met specific quality assurance and competency criteria. Although originally based on ISO9000 and NVQs, this scheme has now been revised and will be based upon the implementation of the recently published BS 6701:2004 and a series of revised FIA approved qualifications. This should provide users with tangible and verifiable evidence that minimum requirements of quality assurance and competency are being met for each installation contract.

In support of competency targets in the field of optical fibre cabling installation, the FIA has operated an **Approved Training Provider Scheme** for many years. This scheme aims to differentiate those training companies that meet specific requirements in terms of facilities, equipment and qualified trainers.

Unfortunately there are occasions, despite the best efforts of all involved, when the service delivered by an FIA member does not meet the expectations of the customer. There may be any number of reasons for this ranging from incompatibility between components supplied through to incorrectly specified requirements. The FIA can help via its **Arbitration Service** which is operated via its

Technical Directorate under the management of Mike Gilmore, FIA Technical and Standards Director (mike.gilmore@btinternet.com).

In contrast to the Arbitration Service, the **FIA Audit Scheme** is a technical rather than contractual service. The scheme acknowledges that procurement should always be made against an appropriate specification. Those who do not fully specify their purchase may be taking very high risks if a dispute arises later as they may have no recourse open to them. However, even where specification has, to all intents and purposes, been correctly stipulated, there will be occasions when controversy arises. The Audit Scheme is able to provide independent verification of specification compliance for those products and services supplied by FIA members to other FIA members as well as external organisations. The Audit Scheme is managed by the Audit Committee that is chaired by the FIA Technical Director. The assessment of compliance will be undertaken by independent personnel using agreed UK, United States, European or international standards and/or codes of practice. The use of this means of assessing conformance allows the service to be provided using fixed and highly economic rates.

Details of these services can be accessed via the FIA web-site at www.fibreoptic.org.uk. In keeping with the technology that the FIA supports, the main point of access to the FIA is the web-site. Non-members can access a variety of services including members details, newsletters and information relating to upcoming events. A password-protected section on the web-site allows members to access most of the FIA services, including the Technical Support Documents, at no additional cost.

The FIA **Technical Support Documents** (or TSDs) have begun to cross the divide between long-haul and private networks and are now recognised on an international basis. Part of the reason for the development of TSDs has been the withdrawal of BS 7718 "The UK Code of Practice for the Installation of Fibre Optic Cabling" which, from 1991 to 2003, defined recommended practices for the installation of optical fibre cabling. The British Standard has been replaced by BS 6701:2004 but much of the guidance has been removed and placed in the FIA TSDs.

The other reason for the publication of TSDs is the rapid change of technologies and associated equipment within the industry. In some respects, these changes are happening too quickly for national, European and international standards to keep up with. The FIA TSDs on topics such as testing of installed cabling are good examples of this and are now being used as the basis for future standardisation.



| | TSD | |
|--------------|------------|--|
| DESIGN | 2000-1-1 | OPTICAL FIBRE CABLING: LAN APPLICATION SUPPORT GUIDE |
| OPERATION | 2000-3-2-2 | ADMINISTRATION: CORDS |
| | 2000-3-3 | POLARITY MAINTENANCE |
| INSTALLATION | 2000-4-1-1 | INSTALLATION PRACTICE: SPLICING |
| | 2000-4-2-1 | TESTING OF INSTALLED CABLING: ATTENUATION USING LSPM EQUIPMENT |
| | 2000-4-2-2 | TESTING OF INSTALLED CABLING: ATTENUATION USING OTDR EQUIPMENT |
| SAFETY | 2000-5-1 | OPTICAL POWER: SAFETY LEVELS |
| | 2000-5-2 | OPTICAL FIBRE: HANDLING OF PROCESSING CHEMICALS |
| | 2000-5-3 | OPTICAL FIBRE: DISPOSAL OF WASTE |

To find out more about the FIA and its activities the web-site at www.fibreoptic.org.uk is a good starting point. Joining, either as a supplier or a user of optical fibre technology is neither complex or costly – if you need access to good clear and unbiased information, look no further than the Fibreoptic Industry Association.