



The Fibreoptic Industry Association

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Secretary: Jane Morrison

The Manor House  
BUNTINGFORD  
Hertfordshire SG9 9AB  
United Kingdom

Tel: +44 (0) 1763 273039 Fax: +44 (0) 1763 273255

e-mail: [jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk](mailto:jane@fiasec.demon.co.uk)

## LATEST INSTALLATION STANDARDS HIT THE STREETS!

by

**Mike Gilmore, Technical Director of the FIA  
for Networking+ (October 2008)**

The final voting drafts of EN 50174-1:2008 and EN 50174-2:2008 are now in circulation - with deadlines in November 2008. These standards have major significance for the telecommunications cabling industry, covering "Installation Specification and quality assurance" and "Installation planning and practices inside buildings". Based on the format of BS 6701:2004, the new EN 50174-1 and EN 50174-2 standards not only introduce substantive changes to their requirements and recommendations but also present them in a more structured way. The latter makes it particularly easy to define the separate responsibilities for installers and their clients - independent of whether those clients are the end-users or their consultants. This article answers a few frequently asked questions concerning these standards.

**Why are these new standards so important?** One answer is their function - primarily they provide a tool for managing the interface between installers and their clients. Another answer is timing - as the standards will be ratified before the end of this year, it is incumbent on those clients to be referencing them, having understood their contents, NOW! Similarly installers will now be bidding for installation work for 2009 and need to be cognisant of the new standards - in readiness for undertaking those installations.

I frequently hear the cry "why make such a fuss - we know all about installations, who needs standards?" My simple answer to this is to recall the people, both clients and installers, who regularly contact asking "what do the standards say about ....". They are not asking me because of some innate curiosity but because something has gone wrong, they are in dispute and want to know what they should have done.

If those standards have been correctly listed in the contract then it is difficult to have too much sympathy. However, just because a standard is not explicitly referred to in a contract does not always offer a lifeline. In a court of law, judgement is often based on what a reasonable person would be expected to do - and this is normally based on the available standards. Our national standard for the "installation, operation and maintenance of telecommunications cabling and equipment" is BS 6701:2004 - which mandates compliance with the BS EN 50174 standards.

Installers also do not realise that the presence of other standards in a contract also mandates compliance. For example, any client wishing the cabling to be designed in accordance with any of the structured cabling standards in the BS EN 50173 series, has automatically stated that the installations shall conform to EN 50174. That being said, it should be remembered that the EN 50174 series applies to all telecommunications/IT cabling - not just structured cabling.

**How does one obtain a copy of the final voting drafts?** One way is to contact BSi and purchase a copy. An alternative is to be a member of a recognised trade association that is involved with their production via BSi. For example members of the FIA can go to their Standards Forum and download drafts of many standards free of charge.

**How close are the voting drafts to the final published documents?** The answer is "very". The only changes that can be made are technical corrections to a fault in the editing process or the correction of misleading text. A couple of technical corrections have already been identified, which is hardly surprising in such comprehensive documents, other may follow. A process is in place to make the required corrections. For example, FIA members are able to log their concerns via their Standards Forum.