

EU Gives Networking Industry Just 12 Months To CE Mark All Cables Used In Construction

Submitted by: Turtle Consulting Group

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From 1st July 2016 all communications cables for use in construction anywhere in the European Economic Area (EEA) are subject to the Construction Products Regulation (CPR).

CPR will require all cables marketed in the EEA to carry a CE mark. To get a CE mark all such communications cables will require to be tested and certified against the newly harmonised pan-European standards for manufacturing process and fire performance. There is a transition period (called the period of co-existence) of just one year.

Said Brand-Rex CTO Ken Hodge: "This is one of the biggest changes to hit the networking industry in over a decade. But it's a really good change as it harmonises the classification of fire performance across the whole of the EEA, and it will radically improve fire safety.

"CPR will now apply to all power, control and communication cabling within buildings and for any manufacturer, or supplier, to get their products through the very rigorous classification process will require a significant investment of resources and clear demonstration of controlled design and manufacturing operations. We at Brand-Rex have been working towards this point for many years and are well prepared."

Hodge explained that many lower quality cables (often made from poorer quality materials which burn badly and produce acid fumes and smoke in fire situations) will fall by the wayside as a result of not meeting the fire safety standards referenced by CPR. Cables with a good reaction to fire will be installed in the future, making buildings and thoroughfares safer for all users. "For anyone unfortunate enough to be caught in a building fire, this will be really good news," said Hodge.

Brand-Rex is well prepared and has been assessing its cables in anticipation of the EuroClass specifications and is ready to CE mark cables as soon as permitted (no manufacturer is permitted to CE mark before the 'date of applicability').

Until now, fire safety and specifications relating to construction products, and in particular cables, have been an unsatisfactory mixture of different standards in different sectors and localities. Due to the way they have evolved they were not even hierarchical with the result that a better performing cable will meet a high standard but often will NOT meet one of the lower fire performance standards! A very confusing situation.

CPR finally brings something that the construction industry and top-tier cable manufacturers like Brand-Rex have been working towards for nearly 20 years. CPR brings, amongst other things, a single fully harmonised fire performance classification system 'EuroClasses' across the whole of the EEA.

CPR means a massive benefit for suppliers to be able to market their products across the EEA and for specifiers and consultants to be able to buy from across Europe and know that the products will meet their local requirement, which will now, by law, be stated using the new EuroClasses.

Brand-Rex believes that the EuroClass classification system is very likely to be adopted internationally in due course.

Said Hodge: "It is important to point out that CPR does not itself dictate which EuroClass must be used in which situation. That is left to individual countries and legislatures. What CPR does prescribe is that after the 12 months transition period ALL requirements anywhere in the EEA MUST be stated using the EuroClass fire safety specification and no other. After that it will effectively be commercially impossible to sell non CE marked cables into EEA projects." (An EU Regulation is immediately 'law' in EEA member states.)

Some countries and states will legislate on which EuroClasses should be used in specific applications. Others, like the UK, will leave that to the equally powerful forces of the Fire Departments, Building Control and the Buildings Insurance Underwriters. "There's nothing more powerful than a massive insurance premium to focus building owners' minds," remarked Hodge.

For cable manufacturers and suppliers (including those who import products from differing manufacturers) wanting to supply EEA markets with a full range of products, they will need to have not just their products classified by notified test labs but also their entire manufacturing process. And even the slightest change to product or process will require revalidation or the CE mark will be withdrawn. In the highest level inspection systems manufacturers will be periodically subject to scrutiny by the CE awarding bodies, so construction and performance of the products are assured. The implementation of the CPR is going to mean a massive shakeout in the EEA and UK networking cabling markets.

Information on the many UK standards and specifications that will change as a result of the CPR can be found at Brand-Rex (<https://www.brand-rex.co.uk/technology/cpr>)

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About Brand-Rex

Brand-Rex, part of the Leviton group, is a global operation, designing, developing and manufacturing the most sophisticated, high performance copper and fibre cabling systems for communications and extreme environment applications. Headquartered in Scotland, UK the company is committed to being a trusted market leading provider of best-in-class communications infrastructure solutions. As well as developing products and systems of the highest quality, the company is entirely carbon neutral and offsets all the CO2 created by the manufacture and distribution of its products.

About Leviton

Leviton is the smart choice, providing the most comprehensive range of solutions to meet the needs of today's residential, commercial and industrial buildings. Leveraging more than a century of experience, Leviton helps customers create sustainable, intelligent environments through its electrical wiring devices, network and data center connectivity solutions, and lighting energy management systems. From

switches and receptacles, to daylight harvesting controls, networking systems, and equipment for charging electric vehicles, Leviton solutions help customers achieve savings in energy, time and cost, all while enhancing safety.

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