The burning question: are you legal?

A piece of EU legislation governing cable fire safety came into force July 2017. If you missed it, you may well be breaking the law. **Habitech**'s Jonathan Pengilley explains the latest CPR rules, and offers multiple ways to fireproof your business.

Play it safe by using CPR certified wire. Habitech is offering over 30 SCP designs: the widest range of CPR approved CI cables currently available.

Let's play consequences. You've just installed an exclusive boutique restaurant with great sound when the nice people from Health and Safety turn up to check the wiring. They ask, 'where's the DoP certificate?' You retort, 'what's a DoP certificate?' The consequence is disaster for your business, because you'll be ripping out the cable that saved you pennies, but which ultimately wrecked your profitability, and cost your reputation a fortune. If only you'd discovered the Construction Products Regulation (CPR) standard EN50575 before first fix.

No doubt you're already across the subtleties of this complex initiative designed to raise, standardise and enforce cable fire safety rules in all EU buildings, but if it comes as a surprise then it really is time you took notice, because CPR (EN50575) became mandatory in July 2017. Part of a raft of new EU legislation covering safety issues as diverse as wind-load performance for external blinds and awnings, balustrade and railing kits, and cross-laminated timber products, CPR (EN50575) demands that all permanently installed power, telecommunications, data and control cables be tested and certified for compliance with a uniform flammability classification. The old flame retardant, non-corrosive and low-smoke/zero-halogen (LSZH) standards have been superseded.

Safety first!

This means that manufacturers selling wire to the EU must first seek a Declaration of Performance (DoP) certificate for each cable from a testing authority, and acknowledge its CPR compliance with a 'CE' label on the drum. Those installing the wire in the EU are obliged, by law, to use the correct CPR-rated cable. Whether you're an electrician pulling mains power through commercial or residential buildings or a low voltage network practitioner, ignorance of the law is no defence, and they'll have you up in front of the beak faster than you can say 'liability' if the cable you installed contributed to a conflagration because it wasn't CPR approved.
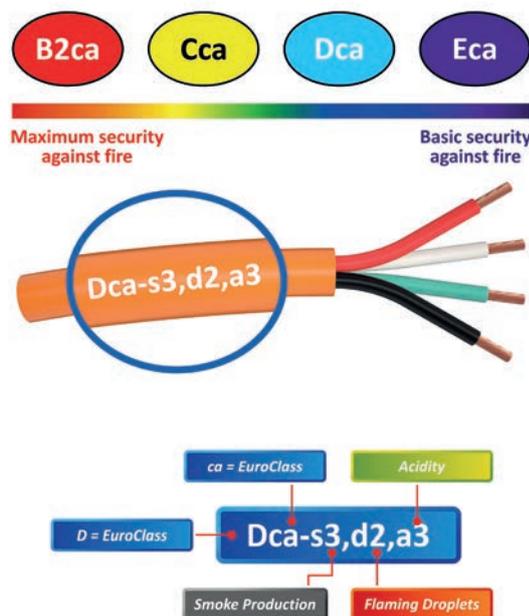
Make sure you're legal

So how do you identify the correct CPR cable for the job? As the legislation beds-in, you can expect building regs for public spaces in particular to do it for you (Transport for London is already on the case). If they don't, insist on a spec before you touch the project, and get it in black and white. For resi, choose the best CPR cable within budget, but always look for CPR compliance.

Euroclass anatomy

There are four new 'Euroclass' categories that apply directly to low voltage cables: B2ca, Cca, Dca, and Eca in ascending order of flammability – B2ca being the least flammable and intended for high-rise Multiple Dwelling Units, airports, arenas and large public buildings; Cca for hospitals, schools and large commercial projects, and Dca/Eca for small commercial, bars, hotels and residential.

Just to make it more complicated, there are three further performance sub-categories covering smoke production (classified s1 to s3 where s1 is the most demanding); flaming droplets (d0 to d2 where d0 is the most demanding); and acidity (a1 to a3 where a1 is most demanding). Marked on each CPR cable jacket and on the drum's CE label, a full EuroClass designation (class + smoke + acidity + droplets) would, for example, look like this: Dca-s3,d2,a3. CPR EuroClasses can be substituted from higher to lower only, so if you're working in resi, make Dca your standard if possible.

Any caveats?

Unsurprisingly, given its wholesale complexity, there are omissions and loopholes in the rollout of CPR legislation. For instance, it doesn't apply to patch cords and interconnect cables such as HDMI, and direct burial cables, nor does it cover cable products manufactured and made available before July 1 2017, in order to manage an orderly run-down of legacy stocks. What's more, although all EU member states and/or CE adopters are required to follow CPR, each EU member state gets to decide which EuroClasses to adopt for their specific construction standards and regulations. Whereas France insists on a minimum Dca standard, Germany specifies according to building type: high-rise being Cca (with Bca in fire escapes) and Eca permitted only for isolated buildings in low population areas. Sweden on the other hand includes the presence of fire suppression systems in its calculations, and in Holland it's Dca minimum in bundles, and B2ca and Cca in high occupancy buildings.

CPR in the UK

Amid the confusion of Brexit, UK guidelines are a little hazier, but it's a safe bet that Dca and Eca will be permissible only for residential and standard commercial properties, and Cca for fire escape routes. As a general rule, hospitals, schools and most public buildings will always have higher EuroClass requirements: check the fine print. Reading around the subject, the consensus is that Brexit is unlikely to affect CPR implementation.

So the stark reality is this: when pre-July 17 stocks are finally exhausted, every drum of cable sitting in a disti's warehouse or an installer's truck will need to be CPR compliant.

And this is where we come in. Notwithstanding all other transgressions, your reputation and liberty are secured by the largest range of CPR-certified cables currently available to CI integrators: over 30 SCP designs for audio, control and data, ready to order from Habitech today. They may be a little more expensive in some cases, but for enhanced quality and performance, the chance to squeeze all those dodgy knock-off cables into oblivion, and against the costs of litigation, they're priceless! Keep cool, act now: search SCP on our website and look for the CPR logo.

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