



SEPTEMBER 2007 ISSUE

Removing Abandoned Cable

Five Ways to Improve Health, Safety, the Environment and your Bottom Line

There are no shortages of environmental concerns these days. Increasingly, citizens and corporations are looking for ways to reduce their environmental footprint. While the task can sometimes seem overwhelming, we at Cerco Cable believe that moving in this direction not only makes sense for the planet, but will also make sense for your bottom line. If your business is in anyway involved with the utilization or installation of cable, you may want to consider the following. Here are five ways that you can address environmental concerns and breathe a little easier by removing and disposing of abandoned cable.

1. Improve Fire Safety

The pathways that carry cabling in the ceilings, walls and air handling systems of most buildings today are composed of strands of cable numbering in the hundreds or more. Rather than rely on cabling left by a previous occupant, new tenants install new systems and the resulting buildup has become a major concern.

Combustible cable threatens fire fighters and occupants alike. Capable of generating more smoke than wood and burning hot enough to weaken steel, legacy cabling can contribute to the rapid spread of fire, impair visibility and put occupants and first responders at risk. Removing abandoned cable from concealed spaces and using limited combustible cabling drastically decreases fire risk.

Although fire safety requirements are there to prevent cabling from promoting the spread of fire and limiting the amount of smoke generated should a fire occur, each additional layer of cabling increases the likelihood of fires (like the [Alexis Nihon Plaza Fire in Montreal](#), the [Seven Dials Fire in London's Covent Garden](#) neighborhood and the [Rockefeller Center in New York](#)).

Source: [Cable Fire Research Organization](#)

2. Lower toxicity and enhance air quality

Even without fire, cables will deteriorate over time. Degrading jackets can introduce hazardous substances including lead into ceiling spaces and air systems. Moreover, when cables burn, they can release dioxins and acid gases. Removing legacy cable is a step towards ensuring better air quality and health in the long-term.

Fortunately, with the advent of RoHS (Restriction of Hazardous Substances) Canadian cable manufacturers have reformulated acceptable lead-free insulating alternatives without significantly increasing cost or degrading performance. Lead oxide which is sometimes used to improve electrical performance in cable insulation and jacketing materials such as polyvinyl chloride (PVC) is either being reduced to acceptable RoHS levels or replaced altogether with lead-free alternatives. However, the deadline for compliance of this initiative was July 1, 2006 meaning that product made prior to that date may not have been produced using contemporary standards.

For more information please read: [Building Design2020.com](#) (Structured Health Risks, August 20, 2007).

3. Reduce your liability

In 2002, the National Electrical Code was modified to require the removal of abandoned cable. Today, Canada's National Fire Code is requiring stricter control of the cable accumulation in suspended ceiling construction. Consequences of non-compliance currently range from fines to insurance companies that refuse to pay in the event of disaster. With the growing popularity of environmental, health and RoHS (Restriction on Hazardous Substances) legislation, stricter code and penalties are no doubt on the horizon.



SEPTEMBER 2007 ISSUE

4. Recycle

Driven by both the green movement and the price of copper, cable is currently being [recycled](#) at a growing number of recycling facilities. Almost all parts of an unshielded twisted-pair cable can be recycled except polyester wraps or draw strings. Recycling abandoned cable is another way to be socially responsible and reduce your environmental footprint. For example, DuPont provides a Certificate of Waste Diversion to the client and/or their contractor in order to account for the fate of any removed cable. This may be included in submittals for the [Canadian Green Building Council](#) (CaGBC) LEED® programs.

5. Follow expert advice and proactively address the problem

Covering all types of buildings, the Building Owners and Managers Association International (BOMA) is a trade association that provides education and advocacy for property owners and managers. [BOMA recommends](#) that owners and managers survey their buildings to identify unused cable and remove it. Real Estate Management trade publications are also advocating this action.

A huge percentage of cabling in buildings is currently not being used. The problem with eliminating the accumulation lies in identifying what cables to remove in a sea of gray multi-conductors. A proactive way to save money in the long-run is to remove old cable during a new installation and ensure that cabling is easily identifiable upon installation. The issues and risks associated with abandoned cable only grow with neglect and each additional installation. With the appearance of more and more companies dedicated to cable removal, all signs point to legacy cable removal becoming a mainstream practice.

Should you have any questions or comments regarding this article, please call your Cerco Cable representative at 1-800-361-5961.

QUICK LINKS

- > [Abandoned cable removal a dogged challenge for all](#)
- > [Cable Fire Research Association](#)
- > [Health, Safety & Toxins \(CNS Magazine, March/April 2007\)](#)
- > [Recycling Used Cable: Challenges & opportunities](#)