

Harmonisation of Low Voltage Cable Colours across Europe

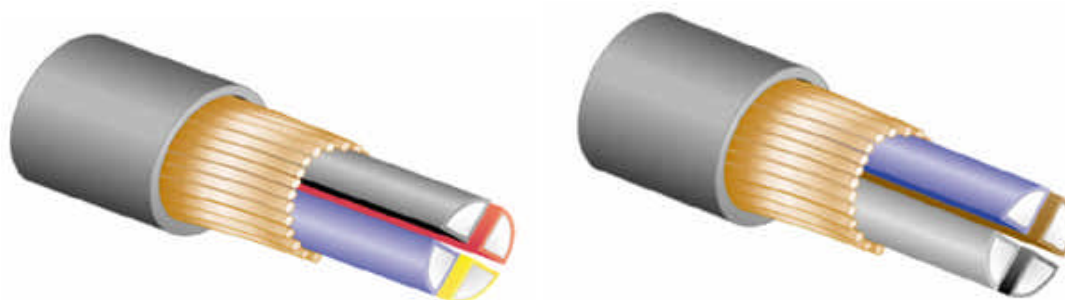
Harmonisation of core colours for low voltage cables and fixed wiring will start to take effect in April 2004 and the changeover to the new European colour scheme will be complete by April 2006. Installations starting on site after 1st April 2006 must be wired in the new colours. The new colours were adopted for appliance flexes in 1975. These changes are now being extended to fixed wiring and will affect all new installations of three-phase and single-phase cables used across the UK on Industrial and Commercial sites as well as Electricity Distribution Networks.

Recognising that change was inevitable the UK National Committee agreed that it would introduce them when CENELEC had agreed these specific colours for the three-phase conductors. This was agreed by the publication of a cable colour standard Harmonisation Document 308 which defines cable core colours. Core colours are currently not standardised across Europe and changes are being implemented everywhere to the same timescale.

Europe has been using **Black** or **Brown** in any combination for the three-phase colours. The UK proposed brown only for single-phase (as in flexes) and **Brown**, **Black** and **Grey** for the three-phases and this was accepted. This enables line (phase) colours to be identified without ambiguities.

After consultation with the cable manufacturers, SP PowerSystems and most of the other Distribution Network Operators will make the change from August/September 2004.

The current UK core colours of Red, Yellow and Blue for the phases with Black for the neutral will change to Brown, Black and Grey for the phases with Blue for the neutral. This is illustrated below for a 4-core waveform cable.



Existing UK Colours

Harmonised European Colours

To co-ordinate this important change, the IEE, Europe's largest professional engineering body, and the British Electrotechnical Committee (BEC) have formed a joint National Safety Umbrella Group. The membership of the NSUG committee includes the IEE, the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), designers, manufacturers and others with interests in the safety of electrical workers and consumers.

There will be a launch of the updated wiring regulations (BS 7671) on 31st March 2004 allowing installation of the new colours from 1st April. A dedicated website has been created to provide further information at:-

<http://www.iece.org/Publish/WireRegs/CableCol.cfm>

Three-phase installations

RED	becomes	BROWN
YELLOW	becomes	BLACK
BLUE	becomes	GREY
BLACK (neutral)	becomes	BLUE (neutral)