

AEI Cables

Middle East GM Graeme Aitlis explains the reasoning behind establishing a local branch of this UK-based manufacturer: "We had reached the point where we felt we really needed someone on the ground here.

"We have been active in the region for many years, trading through local distributors. However, to take the business to the next level, we needed to establish a presence. So this is a logical first step.

"We believe the Middle East is important, and it helps everyone for us to be nearer to our customers in areas like this. While the market has shrunk in recent months, we still see this as a robust environment, and one in which we wish to continue to participate," says Aitlis.

"We are meeting a demand for on-the-ground service in the Middle East, and we firmly believe in offering the highest level of support to all of our customers. This is augmented by our full technical and sales resources."

One of the oldest cable companies in the world, AEI Cables features a diverse range of products, running the gamut from domestic building wires to armoured cables. Industry sectors range from construction to petrochemicals.

"The one area I would say we are most recognised in this region is fire-performance cables for the general construction industry, used for fire alarm and emergency lighting systems, for example." AEI is an acknowledged leader in this area, and continues to satisfy wiring applications in addressable alarm systems.

Fire-performance cables are high-end, high-grade products, with the company complying with international standards such as BASEC 9001, BASEC BA 2250 and LPCB 9001. Aitlis comments that an increasing requirement locally is for civil defense approval, especially in terms of

fire protection, and AEI Cables is able to meet this additional requirement as well. "If you look at the fire-performance cables, we have BASEC and LPBC rating, which people recognise here.

"The next question is: are you civil defense approved? So you really have to have this extra approval to be able to sell such products into this market, and this requirement is actually becoming stronger."

"Our products meet the very highest accreditation standards. The common application of British Standards means our products are appropriate to meet all needs locally in the Middle East. However, we always emphasise the specialist service we offer of tailored design to meet specific requirements depending on the project."

What about the impact of 'green' building standards and regulations on the demand for high-performance cable products? "I would say it is starting to have an effect in terms of a shift towards low-smoke variations of cable products rather than the traditional PVC-based ones."

AEI Cables in the UK is a member of the British Cablemakers' Association (BCA), and thus is part of a global campaign to rid the market of fake or imitation cable products that compromise health and safety.

"Any poor-quality cable is of concern to us. As a member of BCA we have been producing cables to British and international standards for many years, and we believe that these independent recipes give customers confidence that our cables are manufactured to a published standard.

"Any deviation from this quality in the form of rogue suppliers trying to reduce cost is a major concern from a health and safety aspect, where the use of under-sized conductors could have fatal repercussions.



AEI Cables Middle East GM Graeme Aitlis.

"We believe there are many opportunities built on innovation and quality, which has been the byword of the AEI Cables brand for more than 100 years, and for which we are known across the industry."

In terms of current opportunities and the impact of the economic slowdown, Aitlis comments as follows: "We recognise that certain sectors will recover quicker than others, and we appreciate there are many other hidden factors in the recovery process.

"The Middle East remains a strategically important centre for the world, and therefore we anticipate a quicker recovery than in Europe."

In terms of reference projects, AEI Cables has supplied its Firetec armoured and standard cables to the Masdar City project in Abu Dhabi. "This will ensure continuity of power for the fire alarm and detection systems, including exhaust fans for the Institute of Science and Technology.

"Masdar City is the most ambitious sustainable development in the world – it will be the world's first zero-carbon, zero-waste city powered entirely by renewable energy sources, so we are proud to be associated with it."

Duval Messien

The issue of electrical safety is an inevitable corollary of cables and cabling. Electrical safety is a major concern in construction, operation and maintenance, process design, electrical safety services, risk management, workplace safety and regulations and standards. A key player in this ancillary sector is Duval Messien, represented by Manev Enterprise Middle East FZCO.

Technical director Sanjiv Banerjee tells MEP Middle East that this French multinational has very old roots, stemming from 1835, when Paul Duval pioneered the manufacture of braided flexible cables, and 1927, when Georges Messien focused on earthing systems. The merger of these two prodigious talents resulted in the establishment of Duval Messien in 1952.

It might seem strange to consider lightning strikes as a potential hazard in the UAE, but Banerjee points out that Burj Dubai – where the company's third-generation Safelit 3 lightning protection system has been deployed – points to the phenomenon of 'vertical cities' in the region. These have huge electrical loads concentrated on relatively small footprints. In addition, windblown sand around tall towers tends to build up powerful static charges.

As opposed to a simple lightning rod conductor, the Safelit 3 concept is predicated on polarising the lightning conductor tip with a voltage ranging between 35 kV to 45 kV. Safelit 3 has an onboard transmitter that sends out a signal every 90 seconds to confirm the correct operation of the lightning conductor's electronics, including the polarisation of the tip.

In terms of earthing systems, Duval Messien's flagship in this regard is known as TERECS+, described as a 'miracle compound' comprising seven different chemicals. The product quickly achieves a resistance level in accordance with internationally acceptable standards, while its ongoing interaction with the native soil actually increases its effectiveness over time. Maintenance-free and environment-friendly, TERECS+ protects electrical and electronic equipment from ground faults, which are a major cause of electrical damage in the UAE, says Banerjee.

Banerjee also reveals that when TERECS+ achieves an uptake in the UAE of about 1 000 bags a day, Duval Messien is likely to establish a local mixing plant to meet the heightened demand, with the main chemical ingredients imported from France.



Duval Messien technical director Sanjiv Banerjee.

Another service that Duval Messien offers to the local industry is a fully-equipped technical library, including the latest standards and regulations, that MEP engineers can visit, or they can submit specific technical queries for the attention of the company's technical staff.

This forms part of the company's strategy of being a total solutions provider helping to raise the general level of awareness about electrical safety, and the critical importance that design plays in this role. Furthermore, Duval Messien is a key player in DEWA's Safe Home electrical safety awareness campaign.