

Case Study
Copper Clad Aluminum

New York Contractor Encounters Counterfeit Cable

When Mark Rewers, vice president of operations for BN Systems, Inc., a New York-based contractor, was informed by his customer that they had found less expensive cable they wanted to provide themselves, he wasn't immediately suspicious as he assumed they were purchasing the cable from an industry distributor. That soon changed when it came time to install the cable.

"Our crews showed up to do the prep work and realized that the cable the customer was supplying was not the well-known brand that had been specified for installation and warranty,"

said Rewers. "We examined the box and had never heard of the brand before. We couldn't find any specifications or verification of the UL number. After a little more research, we realized that the cable was constructed with copper clad aluminum conductors, which is actually banned in New York City for use as communications cable."

Rewers informed his customer that the cable they had purchased did not meet code and that they would not receive a warranty. At first the customer was not swayed, convinced that the apparently authentic UL mark meant that the cable was listed. Rewers reached out to his manufacturer's representative for help.

"Our cable rep found several articles about copper clad aluminum cable from the CCCA, and another online article indicating that the brand in question

was under investigation for UL fraud," said Rewers. "We provided the information to the customer, and once it reached higher level executives within the company, the customer decided not to use the cable they had purchased. They even tried to sell it to me, but we were not interested."

Ultimately, the customer who purchased the non-compliant copper clad aluminum cable lost about \$30,000. "They bought the non-compliant cable,

couldn't use it and couldn't sell it. Thankfully, we ended up installing the originally-specified cable from a reputable manufacturer—everything

turned out well and the warranty is in place," said Rewers. "My word of warning to others is to not accept any substitutes unless you are 100 percent sure it is UL listed. And I personally will no longer let my customers buy their own cable."

While attending the recent BICSI Winter Conference & Exhibition, Rewers learned even more when he encountered a warning of copper clad aluminum cable at a vendor's booth. "They sent me down to the CCCA's booth where I learned that in addition to not meeting code, the cable could have meant much bigger problems," said Rewers. "I did not realize the risks or the fact that we could have been in serious trouble. We are very thankful that we didn't install it, and thankful for our rep's due diligence. It was our first encounter with copper clad aluminum communications cable, and hopefully our last."

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