



TECHNICAL COLUMNS

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CABLE-TEC EXPO SHOW PICKS

By **RON HRANAC**

My August 2008 column, highlighting last year's Expo show picks, started with this observation: "In what was a rerun of 2007's weather in Orlando, FL, Philadelphia served up heat and humidity — air conditioning was definitely our friend..."

Heat, humidity, and air conditioning definitely weren't on the schedule at this year's end-of-October show. Instead, Mother Nature dished out a couple feet of snow. And as luck would have it, Denver's weather the week after Expo included sunny skies and daytime temps in the 60s and 70s.

"Think ground block, splitter, drop amp, surge suppressor — all in one."

Despite Cable-Tec Expo's move from June to October, the snow storm, and even the awful economy, the confab drew close to 9,000 attendees to the Mile High City. In addition to celebrating SCTE's 40th anniversary, Expo featured top-notch panels in the opening general session, more than two dozen informative technical workshops, tons of exhibits, debut of the Expo Cable Technology Spotlight (this year featuring the SCTE Green Pavilion and Green General Session), and a chance for many to meet the Society's new President and CEO, Mark Dzuban. A big tip o' the hat to the Program Subcommittee and especially SCTE staff for pulling off a successful Expo.

Leakage and dirt

As usual, I managed to find time in an otherwise hectic schedule to make the annual trek around a fair amount of the exhibit hall, looking for interesting technology, goodies, and gadgets. Here, in no particular order, are my Expo '09 show picks.

At first I thought attendees were playing some sort of video game in Trilithic's booth — you know, one in which the player "shoots" at targets on a TV screen. Nope, they were trying out the company's new TFS-FS1 optical leakage detector, a pistol-like instrument that can be used to pinpoint light leaks in fiber optic systems from breaks and bends, faulty splices and connectors, and so on. The TFS-FS1 lets the user know of a leak both visually and audibly, and even works in bright ambient light (I tried to fool it by pointing it at one of the exhibit hall's overhead lights, but the detector was not to be fooled). www.trilithic.com

You've seen them — those disposable paper shoe covers that installers and technicians often wear when entering subscribers' homes. A different take is the Bootie Shoe Cover, a fully machine washable slip-on shoe cover that's lined to keep the dirt inside, has non-skid bottoms, an elastic top, and is said to last nine to 12 months. Bootie Shoe Covers sell for \$12.95 per pair, and bulk pricing is available. www.bootieshoecover.com

Jumpers, suppressors

Broadband International was showing their new selectable jumper equalizers for outside plant amplifiers. Each selectable jumper equalizer has a small horseshoe-type jumper that can be moved among different equalizer values, allowing one plug-in equalizer module to support up to five equalizer values (the actual



number depends on amplifier make/model). The equalizer value of a given selectable jumper equalizer is said to be able to be changed without causing service outages. www.broadbandinternational.com

CommScope sells a line of pre-connectorized coax jumpers available in various standard and custom lengths. The jumpers are suitable for use by cable company installation and service personnel, as well as in self-install kits. But that's not what caught my eye; after all, a number of other vendors also sell pre-fab coax jumpers. CommScope's jumpers can be purchased with the company's optional XpressTite torque sleeve. The torque sleeve allows getting connectors tighter than what is possible by hand-tightening alone, while preventing over-tightening. A clever feature is that the XpressTite torque sleeve is free to move to each end of the cable. In this way, only one torque sleeve is needed for both connectors. www.commscope.com

Diversified Power Solutions was showing the Pemco VSS-20 multi-stage surge suppressors for line power supplies and similar applications. The VSS-20 incorporates a combination of surge suppression, filtering, and over-current fusing. The units are dual voltage (120 or 240 volts), are rated for up to 20 amps at 240 volts, and are available in 15 and 20 amp versions with various plug types, and input and output cord lengths. www.vss-20.com

Relief, tools, batteries

How do I go about explaining this next one? It's not technical per se, but technical folks could certainly use it. Potti Corp. was giving away samples of their Brief Relief disposable, um, urinal bag. Billed as the portable pit stop (I am not making this up), each package includes one of the aforementioned disposable urinal bags — a personal, portable lavatory system for men and women that instantly gels liquid, is odorless, features a splash-proof and spill-proof design, and is trash container safe. The company's Midwest Sales Manager explained to me that Brief Relief would be ideal for cable technical personnel working, say, at a hub site that has no "facilities" available. As well, it can be used discretely in a vehicle — not while driving, of course. When ya gotta go, ya gotta go (ok, that last part is mine). www.briefrelief.com

I'll admit to being a tool junkie. When I wandered by Custom Tool Supply's booth, a display of Milwaukee tools was calling out, "resistance is futile."

One gadget that proved to be a real attention getter was the Milwaukee M-Spector AV M12 cordless multimedia camera kit. The M-Spector is a handheld device with a 3.5 inch LCD TV screen and a tiny video camera on the end of a flexible extension cable. In addition to providing live video from remote, hard-to-see nooks and crannies, the M-Spector also stores up to 7,600 photos, and up to 90 minutes of audio/video. www.customtoolsupply.com

PCT International has a new universal battery testing and charging system for embedded multimedia terminal adapter (eMTA) batteries. The system comprises a server, test software, and a tester/charger chassis. Each chassis has slots for 12 eMTA batteries — two-cell, three-cell, or four-cell batteries from Arris, Cisco and Motorola — and 16 chassis can be stacked in a standard 19-inch rack. Three operating modes are supported: full test (discharge, charge, linearity/capacity measurement), charge only, and discharge only. www.pctinternational.com.

More than a splitter

My Expo 2009 show favorite? Drum roll please...

Picking a favorite is always difficult, considering there are so many excellent products on display in the exhibit hall. This year the nod goes to Evolution's Entry Series five- and nine-outlet drop installation systems.

These look like fancy splitters, but are far more than that. Think ground block, splitter, drop amp, surge suppressor — all-in-one. UL listed and rated to 1 GHz, the Entry Series features an all-passive voice modem port, unity gain downstream, passive upstream, local or remote powering, and an LED indicator

(green=normal, red=troubleshooting required, LED off=no power). All RF ports are spec'd for 20 dB or higher return loss. One of these replaces the hodgepodge of splitters, ground block, and often unsightly cabling usually found in the cable box on the side of the home. www.evolutionbb.com

See you next October 20-22 in New Orleans, a first for Cable-Tec Expo in that city. Mark me down for a side trip to Café Du Monde and some of those yummy beignets.

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