

OUTSTANDING OCEANS EXHIBITOR

By Robert Wernli, VP for Conference Development

This is the first in a series of reports on exhibitors that have continued over the years to participate in and support the OCEANS conferences.



When you attend the exhibits at an OCEANS conference, one of the first corner booths you come across will usually be that of Falmat, a Southern California company that specializes in custom cable technologies. I was invited to tour their facilities by Shawn Amirehsani, Falmat's Eastern USA and International Sales Manager who has over twenty years working in the cable business.

For over four decades, Falmat has engineered and designed high performance cables for severe environments. Although undersea cables amount to 40-50% of their product line, they also supply cables for military, aerospace, industrial electronics, transportation, medical and commercial applications. Their list of clients reads like a shopping list of high-tech companies and organizations ranging from NASA to NOAA and JPL to



Northrop Grumman. Proud of their high quality products that meet military, industrial and international standards, they are quick to point out their Det Norske Veritas Management System Certificate that highlights their conformance to ISO 9001 and AS9100 standards.



The corporate tour began with the basics, where their technicians were preparing the small cables for the winding machines by ensuring each was inspected and had its own distinctive colored striping added. With long runs of cables that can go up to four inches in diameter and include up to nearly 100 separate conductors, the ability to pick out an individual one is critical during QA testing and final assembly for the client. The individual internal

components are then loaded onto the massive planetary winding machines where the finished cables slowly spool onto the cable reels.



Large spools of cable line the floor awaiting shipment to the customer. From ROV cables, with their almost florescent green color for underwater visibility to red cables for video pipe inspection applications, Falmat has a wide selection of standard cables to choose from. “There are a lot more than our standard cable products,” Shawn says, passing me a Custom Cable Request Form. “We can’t just have a customer say ‘I need a cable.’ We need to know all the specs, from the expected working environment to the insulation, shielding, and strength requirements.” He then points out the nearby machines where spools of stainless steel wire are being wrapped around a passing cable providing the necessary strength member. Kevlar is being wrapped onto an adjacent cable.

We then approach a machine that is extruding the jacket onto the nearly-finished cable. As he points out the trough where the hot extrusion is immediately quenched, he says that “Cable technologies have to move forward just like any other industry. We are continuously investigating

and introducing new materials to improve the performance of the user’s products.”



The final stop in the tour is a second, larger building that houses their floor-to-ceiling inventory of wire, cable, sleeving and other materials that allow them to quickly deliver standard or custom cables. Next to the rows of inventory, a large assembly area is processing an order of Mil-Spec cables where several workers are putting the finishing touches on the recently installed connectors. “We provide a full-service capability to our customers with many completed cable assemblies being delivered to military, aerospace and other customers.” He quickly added that “We don’t compete with other local companies that specialize in underwater cable terminations. We provide them with the cable they need, which results in a very complimentary arrangement.”



Moving from the warehouse back to the offices, I was provided with Falmat's full line of brochures that showcased their wide range of standard cables that have been proven in operational environments. Highlighted in the package was their line of "Xtreme" ruggedized underwater cables that ranged from fiber-optic to Ethernet and to Cat5 network data/power cables.

We wrapped up the visit with my request that Shawn comment on just why Falmat has been so supportive of the OCEANS conferences over the years. His answers were refreshing.

"OCEANS is very focused and draws qualified scientists and engineers. This allows the exhibitors to learn what is happening and plan for the future. It allows us to improve our product. We're supporting such advanced ventures as the underwater networks like Neptune. It is also the right size for a show—the right number of qualified attendees is better than the number of attendees. You can't judge a show by the number of visitors to your booth. What you need to determine is what you want to accomplish at the

event. Introducing a new product to an unexplored market is a great opportunity."

"You've participated in the non-North American conferences also. How did those work out for you?" I asked.

"Going to the international venues is an opportunity," Shawn said. "People are scared of going to new places...we're not. It's a global market out there which needs global exposure. Cables are a necessity and we'll be there with our product. IEEE/OES has done a fantastic job of seeing the big picture. The OCEANS in Bremen, Germany was fantastic. We got a lot of business."

And business is the bottom line. Ending on that positive note, if you're after custom cables, visit Falmat on line at www.falmat.com or at their facility at 1873 Diamond Street, San Marcos, CA 92078 USA.

The opinions expressed are those of the author, and no endorsement by the IEEE, its officials or its members is implied.