

WHY CABLE TRAY?

BECAUSE A CABLE TRAY WIRING SYSTEM PROVIDES SAFE AND DEPENDABLE WAYS TO SAVE NOW AND LATER

Large numbers of electrical engineers have limited detail knowledge concerning wiring systems. There is the tendency by engineers to avoid becoming involved in the details of wiring systems, leaving the wiring system selection and design to designers or contractors. Certain decisions must be made for any wiring system installation, and these decisions should be made in the design and construction activities' chain where maximum impact is achieved at the lowest possible cost. Deferring design decisions to construction can result in increased costs and wiring systems incompatible with the owner's future requirements. Early in the project's design life, the costs and features of various applicable wiring systems should be objectively evaluated in detail. Unfortunately, such evaluations are often not made because of the time and money involved. It is important to realize that these initial evaluations are important and will save time and money in the long run. The evaluation should include the safety, dependability, space and cost requirements of the project. Many industrial and commercial electrical wiring systems have excessive initial capital costs, unnecessary power outages and require excessive maintenance. Moreover, the wiring system may not have the features to easily accommodate system changes and expansions, or provide the maximum degree of safety for the personnel and the facilities.

Cable tray wiring systems are the preferred wiring system when they are evaluated against equivalent conduit wiring systems in terms of safety, dependability, space and cost. To properly evaluate a cable tray wiring system vs. a conduit wiring system, an engineer must be knowledgeable of both their installation and the system features. The advantages of cable tray installations are listed below and explained in the following paragraphs.

- Safety Features
- Dependability
- Space Savings
- Cost Savings
- Design Cost Savings
- Material Cost Savings
- Installation Cost & Time Savings
- Maintenance Savings

CABLE TRAY SAFETY FEATURES

A properly engineered and installed cable tray wiring system provides some highly desirable safety features that are not obtainable with a conduit wiring system.

- Tray cables do not provide a significant path for the transmission of corrosive, explosive, or toxic gases while conduits do. There have been explosions in

industrial facilities in which the conduit systems were a link in the chain of events that set up the conditions for the explosions. These explosions would not have occurred with a cable tray wiring system since the explosive gas would not have been piped into a critical area. This can occur even though there are seals in the conduits. There does have to be some type of an equipment failure or abnormal condition for the gas to get into the conduit, however this does occur. Conduit seals prevent explosions from traveling down the conduit (pressure piling) but they do not seat tight enough to prevent moisture or gas migration until an explosion or a sudden pressure increase seats them. The October 6, 1979 Electrical Substation Explosion at the Cove Point, Maryland Columbia Liquefied Natural Gas Facility is a very good example of where explosive gas traveled though a two hundred foot long conduit with a seal in it. The substation was demolished, the foreman was killed and an operator was badly burned. This explosion wouldn't have occurred if a cable tray wiring system had been installed instead of a conduit wiring system. A New Jersey chemical plant had the instrumentation and electrical equipment in one of its control rooms destroyed in a similar type incident.

- In addition to explosive gases, corrosive gases and toxic gases from chemical plant equipment failures can travel through the conduits to equipment or control rooms where the plant personnel and the sensitive equipment will be exposed to the gases.
- In facilities where cable tray may be used as the equipment grounding conductor in accordance with **NEC**[®] Sections 392.3(C) & 392.7, the grounding equipment system components lend themselves to visual inspection as well as electrical continuity checks.

CABLE TRAY DEPENDABILITY

A properly designed and installed cable tray system with the appropriate cable types will provide a wiring system of outstanding dependability for the control, communication, data handling, instrumentation, and power systems. The dependability of cable tray wiring systems has been proven by a 40 year track record of excellent performance.

- Cable tray wiring systems have an outstanding record for dependable service in industry. It is the most common industrial wiring system in Europe. In continuous process systems, an electrical system failure can cost millions of dollars and present serious process safety problems for the facility, its personnel and the people in the surrounding communities. A properly designed and installed cable tray system with the appropriate cable types will provide a wiring system of outstanding dependability for process plants.

- Television broadcast origination facilities and studios make use of cable tray to support and route the large volumes of cable needed for their operations with a high degree of dependability. It would be impossible to have the wiring system flexibility they need with a conduit wiring system.

- Large retail and warehouse installations use cable tray to support their data communication cable systems. Such systems must be dependable so that there are no outages of their continuous inventory control systems.

- Cable tray wiring systems have been widely used to support cabling in both commercial and industrial computer rooms overhead and beneath the floor to provide orderly paths to house and support the cabling. These types of installations need a high degree of dependability which can be obtained using cable tray wiring systems.

CABLE TRAY SPACE SAVINGS

When compared to a conduit wiring system, an equivalent cable tray wiring system installation requires substantially less space.

Increasing the size of a structure or a support system to handle a high space volume conduit wiring system is unnecessary when this problem can be avoided by the selection of a cable tray wiring system.

- Facilities with high density wiring systems devoted to control, instrumentation, data handling and branch circuit wiring have the choice of selecting cable tray or conduit wiring systems. A conduit wiring system is often a poor choice because large conduit banks require significant space, competing with other systems and equipment. Choosing a cable tray wiring system greatly reduces this problem.

- Financial institutions with large computer installations have high density wiring systems under floors or in overhead plenum areas that are best handled by cable tray wiring systems.

- Airport facilities have extensive cable tray wiring systems to handle the ever expanding needs of the airline industry.

- Cable tray is used in many facilities because of the ever present need of routing more and more cables in less space at lower costs.

- Large health care facilities have high density wiring systems that are ideal candidates for cable tray.

CABLE TRAY WIRING SYSTEM COST SAVINGS

Usually, the initial capital cost is the major factor in selecting a project's wiring system when an evaluation is made comparing cable tray wiring systems and conduit wiring systems. Such an evaluation often

covers just the conductors, material, and installation labor costs. The results of these initial cost evaluations usually show that the installed cable tray wiring system will cost 10 to 60 percent less than an equivalent conduit wiring system. The amount of cost savings depends on the complexity and size of the installation.

There are other savings in addition to the initial installation cost savings for cable tray wiring systems over conduit wiring systems. They include reduced engineering costs, reduced maintenance costs, reduced expansion costs, reduced production losses due to power outages, reduced environmental problems due to continuity of power and reduced data handling system costs due to the continuity of power. The magnitudes of many of these costs savings are difficult to determine until the condition exists which makes them real instead of potential cost savings.

DESIGN COST SAVINGS

- Most projects are roughly defined at the start of design. For projects that are not 100 percent defined before design start, the cost of and time used in coping with continuous changes during the engineering and drafting design phases will be substantially less for cable tray wiring systems than for conduit wiring systems. A small amount of engineering is required to change the width of a cable tray to gain additional wiring space capacity. Change is a complex problem when conduit banks are involved.

- The final drawings for a cable tray wiring system may be completed and sent out for bid or construction more quickly than for a conduit wiring system. Cable tray simplifies the wiring system design process and reduces the number of details.

- Cable tray wiring systems are well suited for computer aided design drawings. A spread sheet based wiring management program may be used to control the cable fills in the cable tray. While such a system may also be used for controlling conduit fill, large numbers of individual conduits must be monitored. For an equal capacity wiring system, only a few cable tray runs would have to be monitored.

- Dedicated cable tray installation zones alert other engineering disciplines to avoid designs that will produce equipment and material installation conflicts in these areas. As more circuits are added, the cable tray installation zone will increase only a few inches; the space required for the additional conduits needed would be much greater.

- **The fact that a cable can easily enter and exit cable tray anywhere along its route**, allows for some unique opportunities that provide highly flexible designs.

- Fewer supports have to be designed and less coordination is required between the design disciplines for the cable tray supports compared to conduit supports.

Cable Tray Manual

MATERIAL COST SAVINGS

- Excluding conductors, the cost of the cable trays, supports, and miscellaneous materials will provide a savings of up to 80% as compared to the cost of the conduits, supports, pull boxes, and miscellaneous materials. An 18 inch wide cable tray has an allowable fill area of 21 square inches. It would take 7 - 3 inch conduits to obtain this allowable fill area (7 x 2.95 square inches = 20.65 square inches).

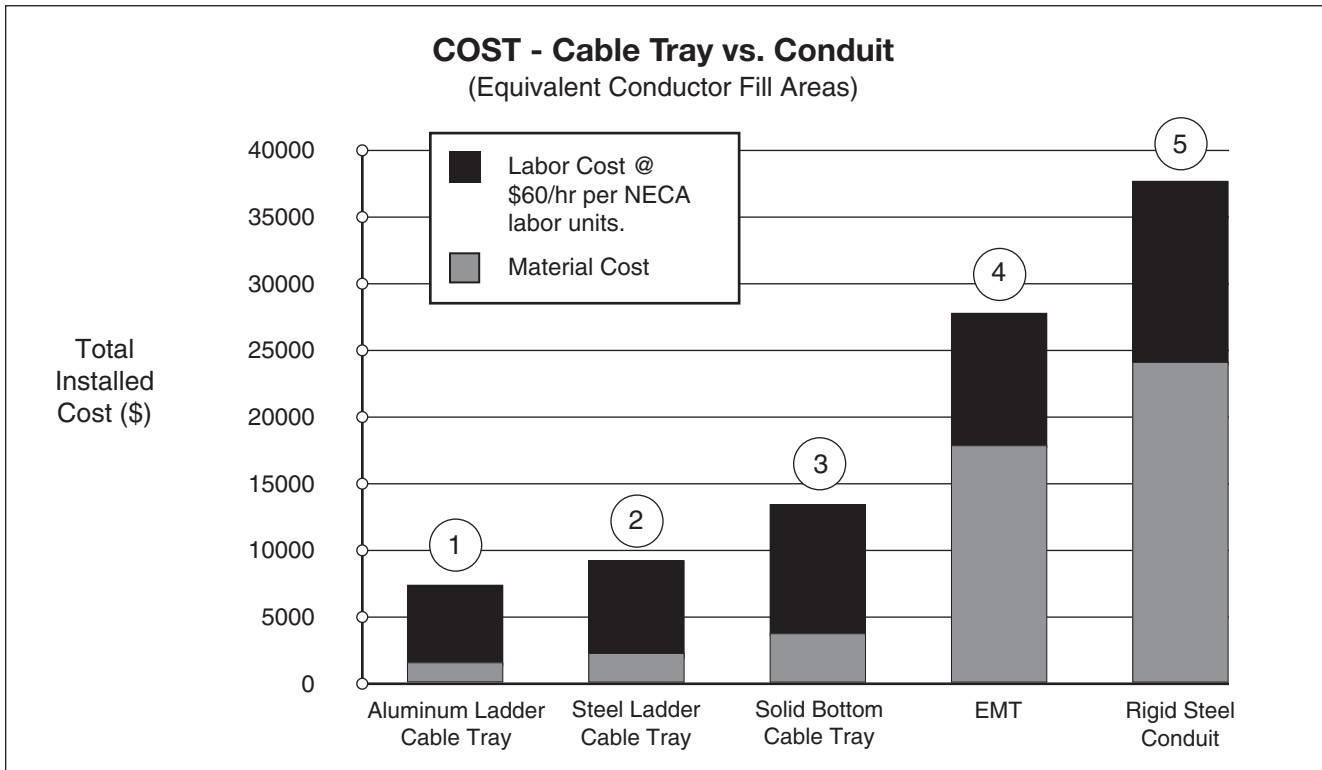
- The cost of 600 volt insulated multiconductor cables listed for use in cable tray is greater than the cost of 600 volt insulated individual conductors used in conduit. The cost differential depends on the insulation systems, jacket materials and cable construction.

- For some electrical loads, parallel conductors are installed in conduit and the conductors must be derated, requiring larger conductors to make up for the deration. If these circuits were installed in cable tray, the conductor sizes would not need to be increased since the parallel conductor derating factors do not apply to three conductor or single conductor cables in cable tray.

- Typical 300 volt insulated multiconductor instrumentation tray cables (ITC) and power limited tray cables (PLTC) cost the same for both cable tray and conduit wiring systems. This applies for instrumentation circuits, low level analog and digital signal circuits, logic input/output (I/O) circuits, etc. There are other cable tray installations which require a higher cost cable than the equivalent conduit installation. Such installations are limited to areas where low smoke emission and/or low flame spread ITC or PLTC cables must be used.

- Conduit banks often require more frequent and higher strength supports than cable trays. 3 inch and larger rigid metal conduits are the only sizes allowed to be supported on 20 foot spans [National Electrical Code® (NEC®) Table 344.30(B)(2)].

- When a cable tray width is increased 6 inches, the cable tray cost increase is less than 10 percent. This substantially increases the cable tray's wiring capacity for a minimal additional cost. To obtain such an increase in capacity for a conduit wiring system would be very costly.



Installation: 200 linear feet of cable supported with four 90° direction changes and all trapeze supports on 8 ft. spans.

- Aluminum, 18" wide, ladder cable tray (9" rung spacing) with all hardware.
- Hot dip galvanized steel, 18" wide, ladder cable tray (9" rung spacing) with all hardware.
- Hot dip galvanized steel, 18" wide, solid bottom cable tray and all hardware.
- 7 parallel runs of 3" diameter EMT with concentric bends.
- 7 parallel runs of 3" diameter galvanized conduit with concentric bends.

Note: Above costs do not include cable and cable pulling costs. Cable costs differ per installation and cable/conductor pulling costs have been shown to be considerably less for cable tray than for conduit.

INSTALLATION COST AND TIME SAVINGS

- Depending on the complexity and magnitude of the wiring system, the total cost savings for the initial installation (labor, equipment and material) may be up to 75 percent for a cable tray wiring system over a conduit wiring system. When there are banks of conduit to be installed that are more than 100 feet long and consist of four or more 2 inch conduits or 12 or more smaller conduits, the labor cost savings obtained using cable tray wiring systems are very significant.

- Many more individual components are involved in the installation of a conduit system and its conductors compared to the installation of a cable tray system and its cables. This results in the handling and installing of large amounts of conduit items vs. small amounts of cable tray items for the same wiring capacity.

- The higher the elevation of the wiring system, the more important the number of components required to complete the installation. Many additional man-hours will be required just moving the components needed for the conduit system up to the work location.

- Conduit wiring systems require pull boxes or splice boxes when there is the equivalent of more than 360 degrees of bends in a run. For large conductors, pull or junction boxes may be required more often to facilitate the conductor's installation. Cable tray wiring systems do not require pull boxes or splice boxes.

- Penetrating a masonry wall with cable tray requires a smaller hole and limited repair work.

- More supports are normally required for rigid steel conduit due to the requirements of **NEC**[®] Table 344.30(B)(2).

- Concentric conduit bends for direction changes in conduit banks are very labor intensive and difficult to make. However if they are not used, the installation will be unattractive. The time required to make a concentric bend is increased by a factor of 3-6 over that of a single shot bend. This time consuming practice is eliminated when cable tray wiring systems are used.

- Conductor pulling is more complicated and time consuming for conduit wiring systems than for cable tray wiring systems. Normally, single conductor wire pulls for conduit wiring systems require multiple reel setups. For conduit wiring systems, it is necessary to pull from termination equipment enclosure to termination equipment enclosure. Tray cables being installed in cable trays do not have to be pulled into the termination equipment enclosures. Tray cable may be pulled from near the first termination enclosure along the cable tray route to near the second termination enclosure. Then, the tray cable is inserted into the equipment enclosures for termination. For projects with significant numbers of large conductors terminating in switchgear, this may be a very desirable feature that can save hours of an electrician's time. Unnecessary power outages can be eliminated since tray cable pulls

may be made without de-energizing the equipment. For conduit installations, the equipment will have to be de-energized for rubber safety blanketing to be installed, otherwise the conductor pulls might have to be made on a weekend or on a holiday at premium labor costs to avoid shutting down production or data processing operations during normal working hours.

- Conductor insulation damage is common in conduits since jamming can occur when pulling the conductors. Jamming is the wedging of conductors in a conduit when three conductors lay side by side in a flat plane. This may occur when pulling around bends or when the conductors twist. Ninety-two percent of all conductor failures are the result of the conductor's insulation being damaged during the conductor's installation. Many common combinations of conductors and conduits fall into critical jam ratio values. Critical jam ratio (J.R.= Conduit ID/Conductor OD) values range from 2.8 to 3.2. The J. R. for 3 single conductor THHN/THWN insulated 350 kcmil conductors in a 2¹/₂ inch conduit would be 3.0 (2.469 inches/ 0.816 inches). If conductor insulation damage occurs, additional costs and time are required for replacing the conductors. This cannot occur in a cable tray wiring system.

- Smaller electrician crews may be used to install the equivalent wiring capacity in cable tray. This allows for manpower leveling, the peak and average crew would be almost the same number, and the electrician experience level required is lower for cable tray installations.

- Since the work is completed faster there is less work space conflict with the other construction disciplines. This is especially true if installations are elevated and if significant amounts of piping are being installed on the project.

MAINTENANCE SAVINGS

- One of the most important features of cable tray is that tray cable can easily be installed in existing trays if there is space available. Cable tray wiring systems allow wiring additions or modifications to be made quickly with minimum disruption to operations. Any conceivable change that is required in a wiring system can be done at lower cost and in less time for a cable tray wiring system than for a conduit wiring system.

- Moisture is a major cause of electrical equipment and material failures. Breathing due to temperature cycling results in the conduits accumulating relatively large amounts of moisture. The conduits then pipe this moisture into the electrical equipment enclosures which over a period of time results in the deterioration of the equipment insulation systems and their eventual failure. Also, moisture may become a factor in the corrosion failure of some of the critical electrical equipment's metallic components. Conduit seals are not effective in blocking the movement of moisture. The conduit systems may be designed to reduce the moisture

problems but not to completely eliminate it. Few designers go into the design detail necessary to reduce the effects of moisture in the conduit systems. Tray cables do not provide internal moisture paths as do conduits.

- In the event of external fires in industrial installations, the damage to the tray cable and cable tray is most often limited to the area of the flame contact plus a few feet on either side of the flame contact area. For such a fire enveloping a steel conduit bank, the steel conduit is a heat sink and the conductor insulation will be damaged for a considerable distance inside the conduit. Thermoplastic insulation may be fused to the steel conduit and the conduit will need to be replaced for many feet. This occurred in an Ohio chemical plant and the rigid steel conduits had to be replaced for 90 feet. Under such conditions, the repair cost for fire damage would normally be greater for a conduit wiring system than for cable tray and tray cable. In the Ohio chemical plant fire, there were banks of conduits and runs of cable tray involved. The cable tray wiring systems were repaired in two days. The conduit wiring systems were repaired in six days and required a great deal more manpower.

- In the event of an external fire, the conduit becomes a heat sink and an oven which decreases the time required for the conductor insulation systems to fail. The heat decomposes the cable jackets and the conductor insulation material. If these materials contain PVC as do most cables, hydrogen chloride vapors will come out the ends of the conduits in the control rooms. These fumes are very corrosive to the electronic equipment. They are also hazardous to personnel. A flame impingement on a cable tray system will not result in the fumes going into the control room as there is no containment path for them. They will be dispersed into the atmosphere.

IN MOST CASES AN OBJECTIVE EVALUATION OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR MOST HIGH DENSITY WIRING SYSTEMS WILL SHOW THAT A CABLE TRAY WIRING SYSTEM PROVIDES A WIRING SYSTEM SUPERIOR TO A CONDUIT WIRING SYSTEM.

Abandoned Cables

Easily identified, marked, or removed - all possible from an open Cable Tray System

For the 2002 *National Electrical Code*, several proposals were submitted to the NFPA to revise the 1999 **NEC**® for Articles 300, 640, 645, 725, 760, 770, 800, 820, and 830 to require all abandoned cables to be removed from plenum spaces.

The purpose of the proposals is to remove the cables as a source of excess combustibles from plenums and other confined spaces such as raised floors and drop ceilings. All of the Code Making Panels agreed that this should be acceptable practice except Code Making Panel 3, which oversees Article 300.

Because Article 300 is exempt from this requirement only low-voltage and communication cables are affected.

Each Article adopted a definition of abandoned cables and the rule for removal. The general consensus is that abandoned cable is cable that is not terminated at equipment or connectors and is not identified for future use with a tag. Please refer to each individual **NEC**® Article for specifics.

Having to tag, remove, or rearrange cables within an enclosed raceway can be a time consuming and difficult job. Without being able to clearly see the cables and follow their exact routing throughout a facility, identifying abandoned cables would be very difficult and expensive.

With the open accessibility of cable tray, these changes can be implemented with ease. Abandoned cables can be identified, marked, rearranged, or removed with little or no difficulty.