

ABANDONED: Money in the Ceiling

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By Matt Brunk

The issue of business disruption is normally the first objection raised when a customer is told that the abandoned cabling in their ceilings must be removed. Otherwise, the undisclosed objection is cost, and since property managers don't want to pay for the removal costs and neither do most businesses; the cabling contractors excuse themselves from the cost burden of removal in new cabling work quotations.



For renovation work, the costs are usually passed on in the demo fees if the prime contractor is following the rules of removal. For most office leaps that occur- businesses negotiating better lease deals or wanting to change their digs- most cable is left in the ceiling.

The **National Electric Code** is pretty clear on the subject since amending the code for treatment of abandoned wire since 2002. **BICSI** has included in their training that abandoned cables must be removed and everyone including **Dupont** agrees that not removing abandoned cabling is a safety threat. The idea behind the safety issue is to reduce the amount of **toxic fumes** in fires.

While copper scrap prices are certainly higher than in recent history- even back in the early 1980's; the dilemma is cost of labor over recovery benefits. Recovery is simply the scrap value of the recyclable wiring. Getting the wiring out of the ceilings, into the truck and to a buyer is another cost. Then, the burden of liability falls on the guy pulling the abandoned wiring out if and when a business suffers disruption. Business may suffer disruption from two reasons. First, it all looks pretty much alike. You want a test on every cable to determine if it's connected at the MDF or IDF? That slows down the recovery process and the technicality is if there is at least one end exposed and not terminated, then it should be yanked. The other issue is that existing working cables can be damaged by the back-pulling of abandoned drops. Sure, the techs can be safe and pull carefully and slowly but friction causes heat and the more cable and the longer the drops the more heat and more likely they are to damage a working cable. Then, tell guys working at ten bucks an hour to remove abandoned cabling to be careful.

Scrap cable isn't valued all the same either. Electricians and plumbers fair better since they are dealing with heavier copper cables and copper piping. Some scrap companies won't accept mixed lots of wire or will pay much less when it is mixed.

The construction process must change as must the process that we use today to wire and maintain the wiring safely within buildings. This kind of change comes about slowly and while newly found money just maybe in the ceilings, it's getting to it and getting it out cost effectively that will remain challenging.

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