

Meeting new demands

The Industrial Fabrics Association International hosted the largest speciality fabrics show in the Americas, IFAI Specialty Fabrics Expo 2013 and Advanced Textiles Conference & Trade Show, co-located with Specialty Graphics Imaging Association's (SGIA) annual show. **Kathlyn Swantko** reports from Orlando

"SOLUTION-DRIVEN FABRICS" was a theme heard repeatedly throughout the tradeshow floor at IFAI Expo/SGIA Show, held in Orlando, Florida in October. Textile companies are taking proven technologies and seasoned industry experience and moving into other markets in an effort to provide innovative solutions in engineered products that are specifically suited to customers' needs.

Reacting to the cutback in the military spending, companies are tweaking their fabrics to create offerings that have commercial applications. "We have taken our military technology into a new commercial tent fabric," said Sherry Fisher, shelter program manager for BondCote. "We have discovered that we can apply our expertise into new industrial tent applications for events, expeditionary mining, and protection tents for cold climates."

Volker Mueller, director of business development for Cooley Group, agrees: "People are thinking more about applications today. They are looking for new

products to achieve a solution. And, to grow a story, you've got to have some 'hotspots'."

This solution-driven movement provides textile companies with a systematic yet flexible approach to innovative design that offers their customers fabrics with exact specifications for a wide range of capabilities in terms of construction, texture, and pattern. Textile businesses that have been working with the military have found they are able to provide a new customer base with reliable relationships and programmes that maintain a focus on excellence in product and service.

Co-locating two shows -IFAI Expo (Industrial Fabrics Association International) with SGIA Expo (Specialty Graphic Imaging Association) - also brought favourable reviews from exhibitors.

"We are very excited to be involved in this expo, because it combines our two biggest shows in the industry," explains Jeannette Hendrickson, marketing manager for Miller Weldmaster. "The show provides 'hands-on' opportunities for attendees to see how our welding solutions work."

Here are our pick of the highlights from the show:

BondCote is a solution-driven manufacturer that featured its new commercial applications for tent fabrics. What had previously been primarily a military application, BondCote is now offering engineered and manufactured driven solutions for such commercial applications as commercial/event tents, solar shading, insulated and single-wall liners, repair tape, ducting, as well as soft floor, bags, and ground cover uses. Sherry Fisher said: "We want to partner with customers to develop state-of-the-art solutions for their new designs, providing them with a long-term technical advantage."

Cooley Group is known for its award-winning portfolio of highly diversified engineered fabrics. The company presented two new geomembrane fabrics at the expo, which represent the widest reinforced geomembrane in the market. In addition, Cooley introduced Enviroflex PE with sustainable signage solution, utilising ColorPro Technology for use with HP Latex and UV inks to the US market.

The Cooley Group's CoolGuard PW, which is formulated with DuPont Elvaloy (KEE), a terpolymer component of a unique alloy material system, is designed for portable water applications like reservoir liners, baffles and flexible tanks.

The company's Cool20 fabric is a reinforced geomembrane, specifically designed for extended use in floating cover applications. The proprietary blend of polymers, including DuPont Elvanoy, results in a floating cover that has a longer shelf life than CSM-type products, and will withstand 30 years of continuous use in the most

Cooley Group's non-PVC Enviroflex PE billboard, utilising ColorPro Technology for HP Latex and UV Inks



environmentally demanding applications.

Herculite Products showcased its Herculite Natura fabric, a new textile featuring the look and feel of woven canvas cloth on both the fabric face and the reverse side. Made of a high performance PVC composite core, stabilised with high tenacity yarn, Natura is said to be completely waterproof, weather-tight, highly fire resistant, and has an SPF of 50+. Natura is ideal for awning applications that cover outdoor seating areas and protect people and furnishings from inclement weather and the sun's harsh UV rays.

Highland Industries, part of the Takata family of companies, said its customers in the automotive, industrial, aerospace and other various fields have complex, ever-changing needs. Bill Fields, product manager, said: "To meet these needs, our engineers don't just fabricate solutions—we invent them. We've taken developments made for one side of our business, and have used it for other applications."

Jason Mills provides technical knitted mesh fabrics for specific industrial applications. A few of the fabrics for targeted applications showcased at IFAI Expo included: a 1000 denier raschel poly knit with FR treatment for a golf simulator screen; a 1000 denier nylon FR raschel knit for magazine-rack pockets on the Boeing 787 airplane; and a UV-FR treated, solution-dyed poly knit as a sunroof windscreen for an automotive manufacturer. The company offers both custom-made and stock fabrics.

Miller Weldmaster, creator of the Autobond series that offers automation solutions for cutting, material handling, process control and marking, featured its new Moduline system at IFAI. The new Moduline system is specifically designed for customers who want to improve their production process through automated solutions that deliver greater business profitability. The unique design system



Activity in the aisles at IFAI and SGIA Expo

allows customers to choose from numerous automation choices, irrespective of their businesses' production demands. The Moduline System offers product versatility through a modular frame construction that incorporates fabric tension controls; multiple welding gantries for continuous welding; and traverse cutters to eliminate space constraints. The machine is also equipped with a PLC touch screen, multiple recipe storage, and remote service software. The system can be used for fabricating such products as inflatables, awnings/shades, truck tarp curtains, tents, banners/billboards, ducting/ventilation, geo-liners, and filtration products.

Offray Specialty Narrow Fabrics, another "solution-providing company", showcased its new collection of Sentry FR elastics, which are available in blends of Kevlar, Nomex, and PBI. The elastics offer heat degradation resistance, which have been proven to perform 20 times better than regular elastic. The product is no melt/no drip, and has design flexibility for assembling thinner/flatter profiles, and can also have wires incorporated into the elastic for transmission purposes.



A collection of FR webbing, straps and elastics from Offray Specialty Narrow Fabrics, including its new Sentry FR elastic

Waubridge Specialty Fabrics featured its Pavenex fabric, a nonwoven blend of oxidised PAN fibre (polyacrylonitrile) used to make carbon fibre. Pavenex is inherently flame-resistant and offers direct contact protection from spark, weld splatter, arc-flash, extreme heat and flame. The fabric also offers excellent durability and abrasion resistance without the use of harmful chemical treatments. Pavenex is engineered for use in insulating applications for PPE with a continuous exposure of 600°F.

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