

FENCING TIMES

XL Edition

2023, Issue 5



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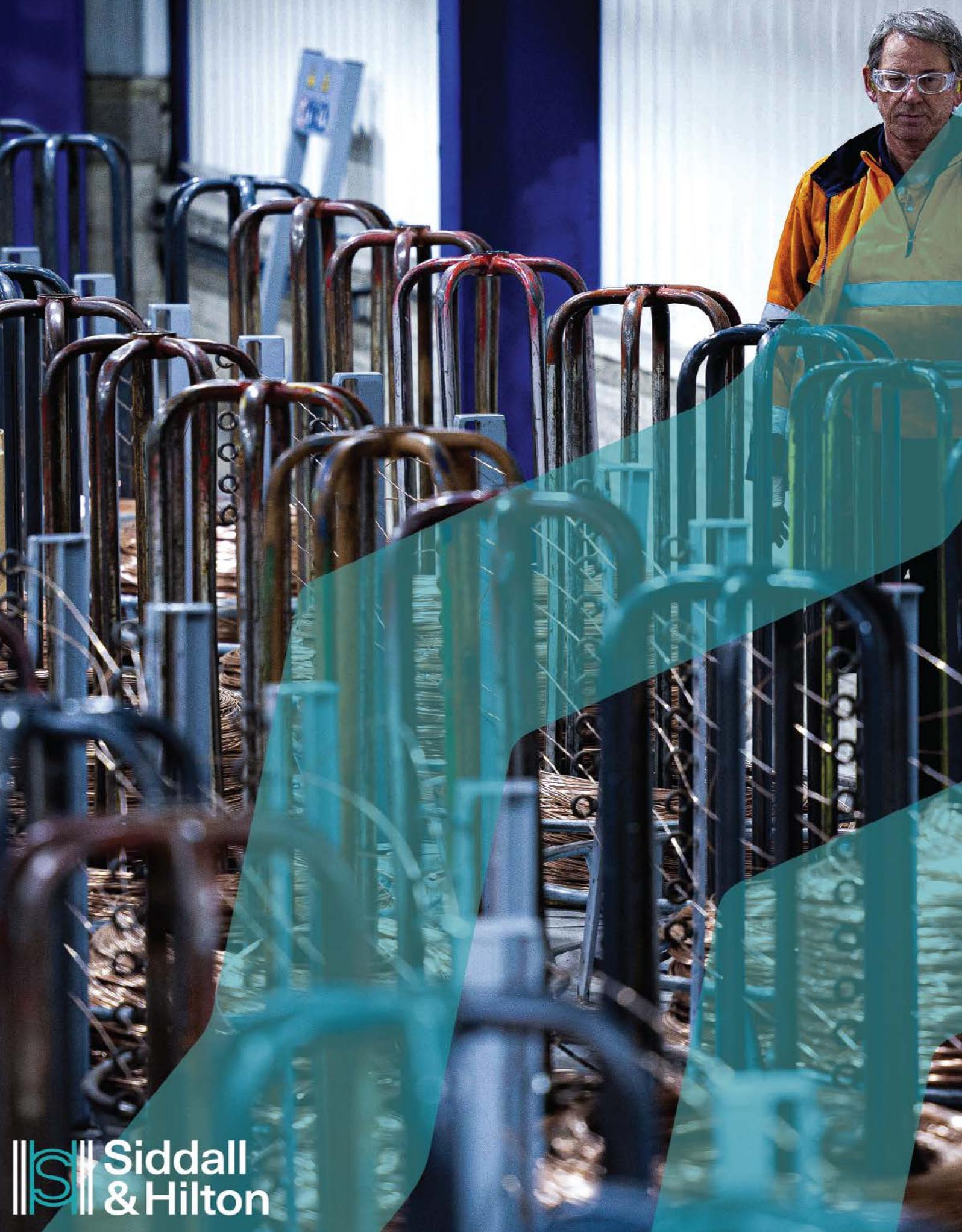
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CIRCULATION:

Fencing Times is published in both print and digital editions. More than 17,000 readers in 7000 businesses across Austria, Belgium, France, Germany, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Switzerland and the UK read Fencing Times in their own language. An additional international edition in English is sent to readers throughout Europe.

SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CUSTOMER SERVICE:

Every fencing business¹ is sent a free copy of each edition. Additional print copies can be ordered for € 12,50 per issue (€ 150 per year). Digital copies are available free of charge and in unlimited quantities, so everyone at your company can read the digital edition without charge.

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1) In Belgium, Germany, France, the UK, Ireland, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Austria and Switzerland.

What are you doing it all for?

Whenever we come across fencing installers who want to sell their business – usually because they want to retire and they have no children willing to take it over – we hear that they are finding it extremely difficult to find a buyer. In most cases, it turns into a clearance sale. The vehicles go to a Romanian export trader. The machinery and tools end up with another fencing installer in the area. If you're lucky, they'll also want to have the customer base but that almost always brings in less than expected, because all those addresses are also in Yellow Pages and the customers will automatically end up with fencing installers in the area anyway, if the current fencing installer ceases business. The only thing of real value is usually the buildings. If these have been paid off, they can be leased or sold and the fencing installer will have enough money for his retirement.

But in virtually every case, the business itself is lost. The business for which they worked all their lives and strained every muscle, the business for which sacrifice after sacrifice was accepted even though it deprived their own family of much time and attention – that business simply ceases to exist overnight. The sign is taken off the front, the name disappears from Yellow Pages, and that's that.

In itself that's not such a big deal if you're a fencing installer purely and simply because you really enjoy the job and love putting fences in the ground. In that case you've had an enjoyable profession all your life that you can look back on with pleasure during your retirement.

But if you put in long days all your life because you wanted to build a great business that would provide employment for decades to come and that would keep your name alive even after your death, then it's rather a shame. And if you did it because you hoped that one day it would generate enough money for a villa in Ibiza, with a fridge full of champagne and a swimming pool full of girls in bikinis (or sun-tanned pool boys, for the female fencing installers), then you're in for a nasty shock when suddenly it appears that no one wants your business.

If you don't have a successor to whom you can transfer the business little by little, then for selling your business you are dependent on other fencing installers or investors. If you want them to pay a fat price for your business, there are two incredibly important things that most fencers either fail to do or do too late.

The first one is that you need to ensure your trade name has value. This name can produce more than the buildings and the fixtures and fittings combined. A good name radiates confidence. Customers also prefer to buy their new car from the official dealer rather than at the bazaar. This is because it employs professionals and also because it has a big name at the front. This name reassures you that you'll get better service there than at the unbranded dealer on the street corner. And if you do pay over the odds, at the dealership it won't be by as much.

The same goes for fencing customers: the bigger your reputation in the region, the more they'll pay to buy a fence from you.

A tropical beach scene with a palm tree in the foreground, a blue ocean, and a clear sky. The palm tree is on the right side of the frame, with its fronds extending towards the top right. The ocean is a vibrant blue, and the sky is a clear, light blue. The beach is sandy and occupies the bottom half of the image.

But it can work the other way round too. If you aren't well-known and are just one out of many fencing installers in Yellow Pages, customers will look at the price only. If you're half a euro dearer, they'll go to someone else. Investors know that as well. The bigger your name, the more interesting is your business.

A pleasant side effect is that – even while the company is still yours – you earn more. And this gives you money to hire more salespeople and erectors, allowing you to keep growing and earn even more.

Establishing a reputation is often easier than you might think. You don't need the same brand awareness as Coca Cola to be of interest to investors. All you have to do is show that customers in your region think of your company when they need a fence. A lot of fencing installers have managed to get there, so it is possible. Even if you don't know much about marketing.

Fixing a nameplate to every fence you install is a first, easy and very effective method. Some fencing installers are hesitant to do this. They think the customer will think it ugly, or regard it as too boastful. But if you get over your diffidence and modesty and hang a nameplate on every fence, you will really benefit from this. Hang it on uprights every 25 metres and hang it on every corner and next to every gate. Make sure your name is big enough for it to be read from the street. You'll be amazed how quickly customers will say that they came to you because they saw a sign on a fence.

A second, relatively easy method is to sponsor the regional sports association. If it needs a fence, offer it one for the price of the materials, provided it lets you hang banners there. Or, if your cash flow allows, provide the fence completely free of charge in exchange for more and bigger banners. The more eye-catching the banners, the better.

The second point you need to have in place to be interesting to investors is more difficult: your company has to be able to operate without you. And then preferably operate in such a way that it continues to grow a bit year by year. In a lot of fencing companies, the owner is the driving force. He does all the important things himself and is constantly motivating his staff for all other tasks. That's a major pitfall as it means your business collapses if you're no longer there.

If you're (still) small – with one team out on the road and one employee in the office at most, it's almost impossible to make yourself redundant. Then the first priority is to grow bigger. But once you have three or four teams on the road, plus an extra salesman driving around and an extra buyer and planner in the office, then it's time to gradually shift more of your own work to them. You can then devote the free time it gives you to training and making your people more efficient, or looking for even more people to help.

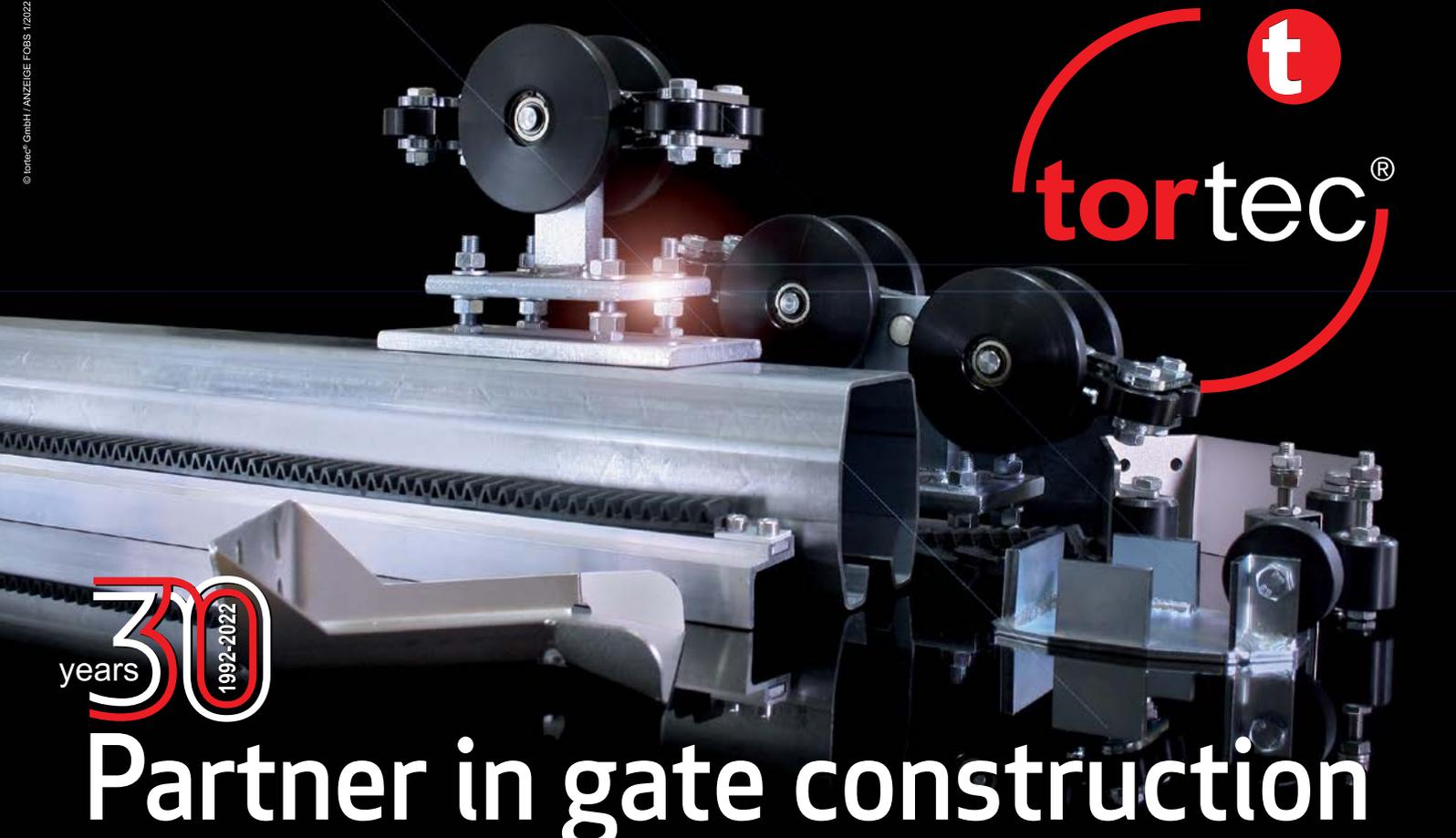
Of course, this second point is easier said than done. And it can't be done in a week either. But it's something you will have to work on a bit every day between now and the date when you want to retire, assuming you want to sell your business for a decent price by then. Because if you wait until you're 65, it'll be too late.

Even if you already have a successor, the latter point still applies. Whether it's one of your own children or a loyal employee: start thinking in good time about how you'll transfer the business. Because that will involve all manner of things. From a legal perspective and more especially from a taxation perspective also. No matter what country your business is located in, the tax man is always at the head of the queue to cream off as much of the sale's proceeds as possible.

If you manage to get a good price for your business that allows you to retire to a Caribbean island, feel free to send us your new address: we'll send the Fencing Times on request to any country with postal services. ■



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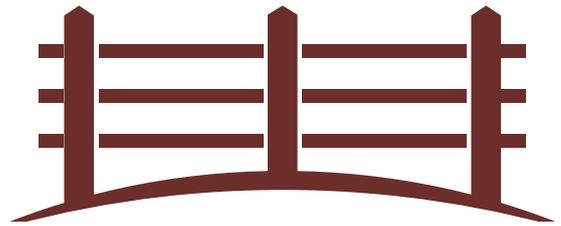
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FENCE POST

Ian @ 360Protect

Ian Rendell of fencing company 360Protect from Leeton in New South Wales, Australia, sent us this photo. That's a new one for us, we don't see fences like that in Europe. It's great that you read us, Ian, all the way over there on the other side of the world. Thanks for the photo!





Christel @ Arfman

Christel ten Berge of fencing company Arfman in Holten, the Netherlands, came across this cute little fence. Old-fashioned decorative curls, modern clean lines and a laser-cut cow as well, all in a panel that's less than a metre long. Great find Christel, thanks for sending it in!



Eric @ Highland

Eric Nijpels of agricultural fencing company Highland Stall & Weide, from Sottrum near Bremen in Germany, loves flowers and came across a twin wire panel in bloom. "Beauty can't be constrained," he writes. Thanks for your photo, Eric!

Samuel @ AOS

Samuel Adolph of AOS came across this funny little gate in Port d'Andratx, on the Spanish island of Majorca. Thanks Samuel!





Handwritten graffiti on a concrete wall, including the letters "G", "H", "R", "A", "P", and "A".



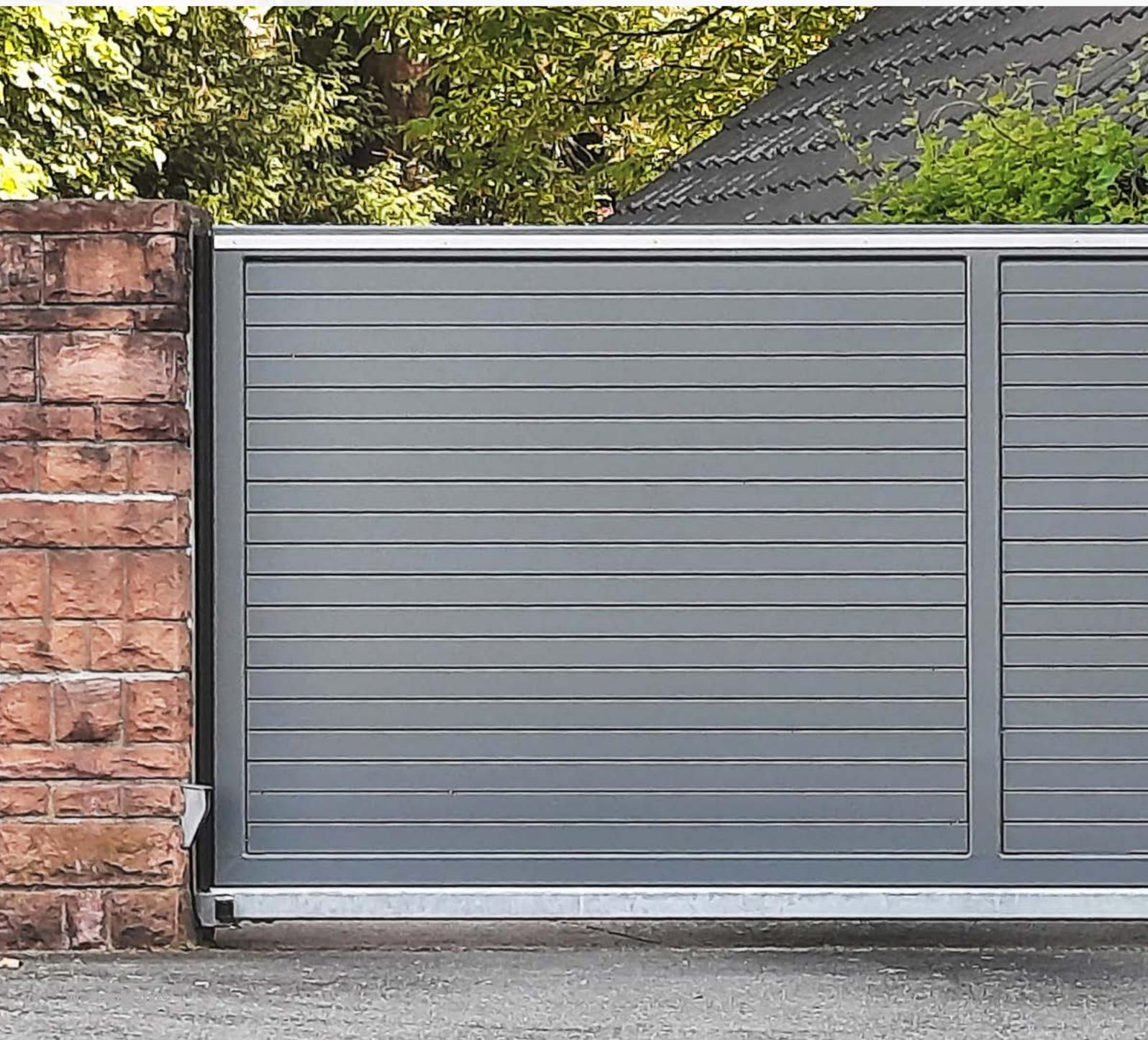
Curved ball-stop fence

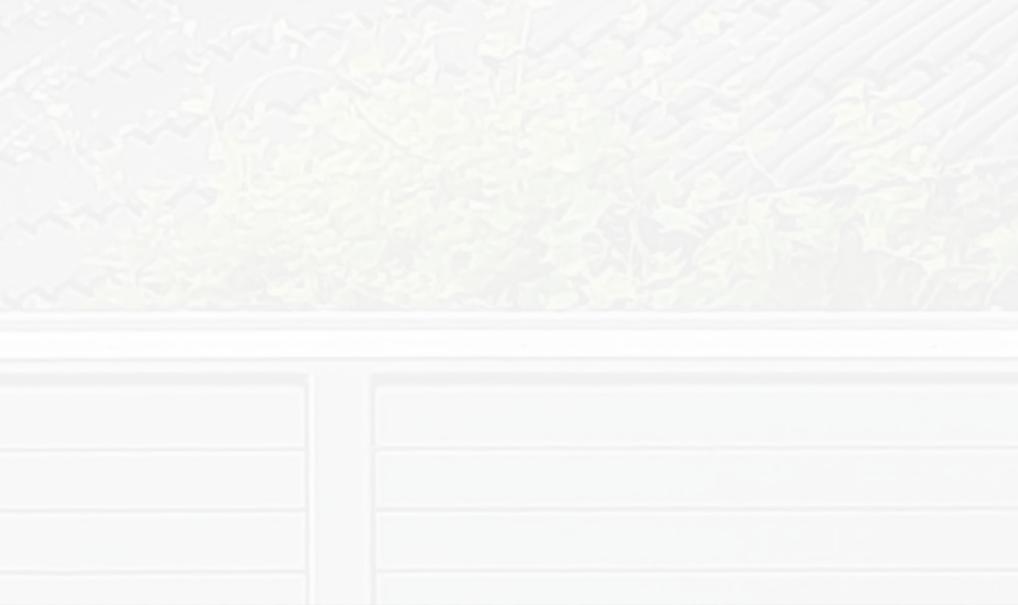
This photo comes from Sybille Bach of Zaunbau Bach in Schorfheide, near Berlin. The posts of this ball-stop fence are a bit crooked, but that was a deliberate choice. Beautiful job, Sybille! The Locinox construction radio is heading your way.

Send us your photos!

Would you like to share a great photo with your colleagues in the industry? Scroll through the photos on your phone and send the most beautiful and fun ones to fencepost@fencingtimes.com. Send as many as you like, we can never get enough! The reader who submits the best photo of the month will win a Locinox construction radio.

Triebenbacher presents certified and modular basic gate





Triebenbacher, a German manufacturer and wholesaler of fencing and gate components, and Cais, a Czech manufacturer of gate components, have joined forces to launch a modular and certified basic gate. Using the Connect 60 package, gate manufacturers can legally build their own gates, without having to go through the entire certification process themselves.

The idea for the modular gate came about from a number of conversations on CE-tested product groups. “We are the importer of Cais for Germany and Austria,” says Dirk Wiegand, who is technical lead at Triebenbacher. “Cais asked us whether we saw a market for modular gates. They wanted to make it easier for gate builders to produce their own gates by supplying them not ‘only’ the roller mechanism with parts, but also a structure into which they could then fit their own infill. We thought that was a great idea – and immediately saw even more possibilities: the certification of those gates in combination with a Sommer drive. We are part of the Sommer group. So then we tested and certified a drive column and a separate drive from Sommer in combination with the new gate structure.”

CONNECT 60 WITH CE

“With the Connect 60 package, gate manufacturers or installation companies have a ready-made, electrically driven basic gate,” continues Wiegand. “At the same time, they retain complete freedom over the type of infill, so they can customise it to suit the customer’s wishes or the fencing type they install on either side of the gate. Cais supplies the mechanical part while Sommer supplies the drive and all the safety accessories. We then combine all this into a single package here in Kirchheim. The gate builder assembles everything, adds their own infill and can deliver a gate with type approval that complies with both the Machinery Directive and the Construction Products Regulation. Complete with declaration of performance, declaration of conformity and everything associated with these.”

MODULAR

Connect 60 is a modular system. All components are supplied on a pallet. The leaf and lower beam are divided into segments. *"Given today's transport costs, that's invaluable,"* says Wiegand. *"For a gate with a 4-metre opening width, the total gate length is 5.85 metres, but the package length is only 2.85 metres. Gate manufacturers can then screw the various segments and parts together themselves without having to do any welding. All screw holes are pre-drilled and we provide clear assembly drawings. Not only for assembling the segments, but also for installing the drive unit and even how best to fit different infill types. In addition, all parts are already galvanised. The gate manufacturer only needs to have the gate coated. If the customer wants a powder coated gate, that is. It can stay galv-only too."*

SPECIFICATIONS

In addition to the lower beam and leaf segments, the complete Connect 60 package includes a set of support wheels, a run-up wheel, a run-up shoe, a header for the lower beam, a tensioner for the diagonal strut at the rear and a guide wheel. An additional two gate posts on a base plate can be included as an option. For automation, you can choose between the Sommer SP900 – a drive in a guide post – or the Starter sliding gate drive. The Connect 60 is available with an opening width of 4 metres and in heights of 1100, 1300 and 1500 millimetres. *"For the introduction, we went with the most commonly ordered sizes for private gates,"* says Wiegand. *"Depending on what sizes are in further high demand, we may expand the series further in due course."* The Connect 60 package is on sale since this summer. ■





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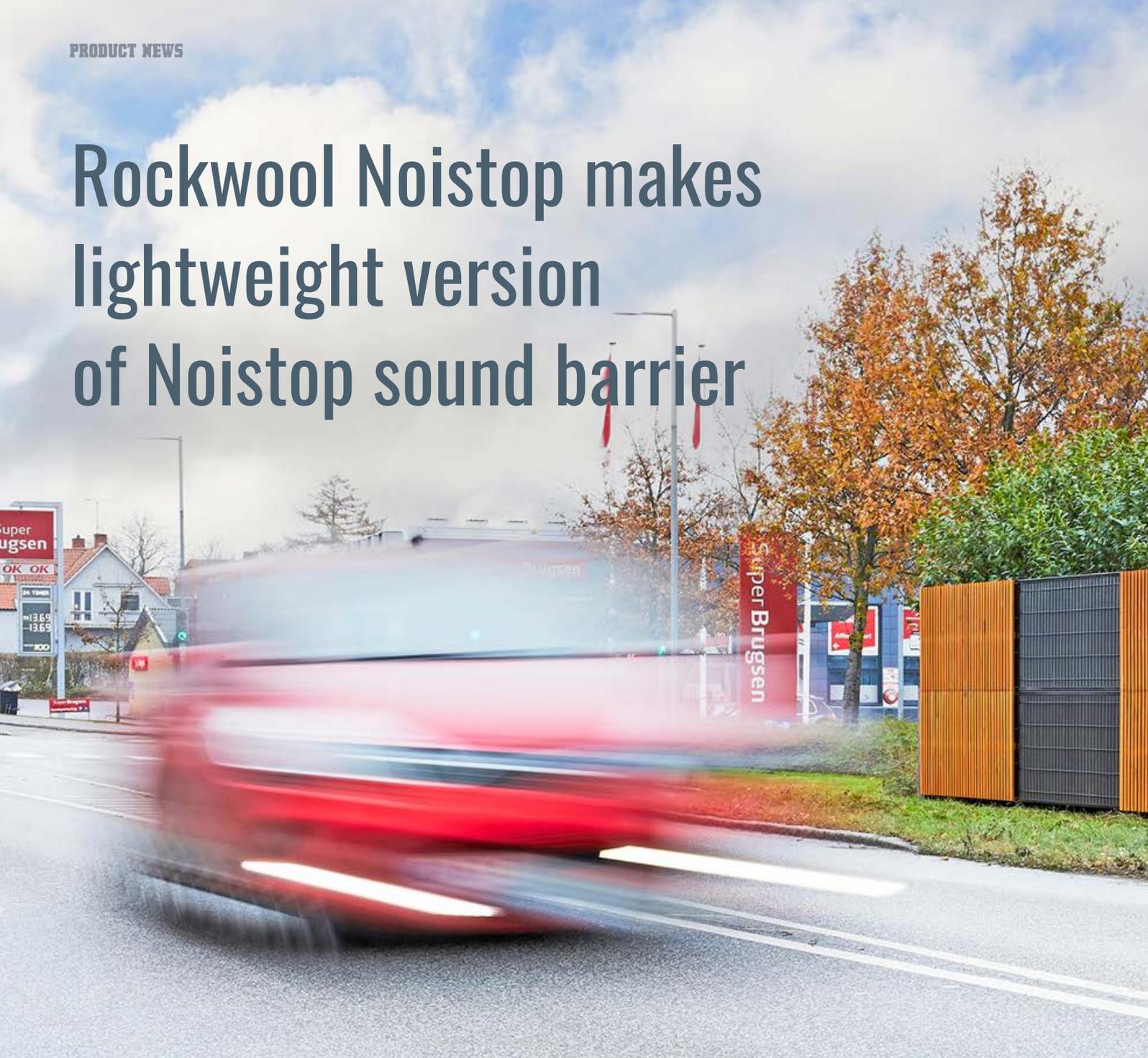
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Rockwool Noistop makes lightweight version of Noistop sound barrier



Danish multinational Rockwool launched a lightweight version of its Noistop sound barrier fencing this season. The new fence is called Noistop Essential and is a combination of the existing products Noistop Steel and Noistop Wood.

“There was market demand for a lighter version of the existing Noistop modules,” business manager Barbara Anstötz says. “A fence with acoustic properties that’s able to compete with other types of fencing like plug-in fencing or other acoustic fences. That’s why we developed a third Noistop sound barrier.”

MIX AND MATCH

Noistop Essential is a single system. “Just like Noistop Steel modules, the basis of the fence are steel frames filled with Rockwool stone wool,” Anstötz says. “The steel grid has a rectangular mesh, so they’re better matching the popular mesh panel fences. Additionally you can choose to add-on cladding made of wooden slats onto the frames – along the entire fence length, if the customer wants a fence with a completely wooden exterior, but you can also clad just single sections or modules with wood.

We call it ‘mix and match’; you can create many sorts of variations and give the fence a very playful look. Without any cladding, the customer has a maintenance-free steel fence, which they can either leave as it is or grow climbing plants on. The possibilities are endless.”



ROCKWOOL

APPLICATIONS

Noistop Essential was developed mainly for the residential market. "Since Covid, house owners have been spending more time around their property," Anstötz says. "As a result they also inconvenience and annoy each other more, especially in the garden. This created a need for a slim fence to be placed between gardens and not necessarily towards the road. With Noistop Essential, they have a sound barrier that absorbs a lot of noise while also being adaptable to suit their personal taste. The new fence comes into its own anywhere that space is limited, for example on private gardens, in or around hotels, on apartment complexes roofs, or around restaurant terraces, schools and day care centres. We've already used them to surround quite a few padel¹ courts. And finally, Noistop Essential is also ideal for making sure the neighbours don't have any issues with your heat pump. The University of Salford in Manchester recently carried out extensive testing in the UK with our dedicated distributor IKoustic and found Noistop Essential extremely suitable for this."

1) Padel is a trendy but noisy cross between tennis and squash

STONE WOOL

Noistop Essential has a core made from a new, high-absorbing and there with efficient stone wool. "That's the advantage of being part of a major company," Anstötz says. "The Rockwool Group continuously improves in both our production facilities of stone wool as well as developing products that contribute to many of the society's biggest challenges, like noise pollution. For Noistop Essential we use the latest stone wool made for outdoor use; it has an unprecedented density of 190 kilograms per cubic metre. This means that we can halve the thickness of the elements, while still achieving almost the same noise reduction values as Noistop Steel og Noistop Wood." The new acoustic fence blocks 18 decibels of noise and absorbs 9 decibels. "We tested our products at TÜV in Essen, Germany, a certified institute for acoustic testing. With those figures Noistop Essential meets the requirements of Class B2 of EN 1793-2 for insulation and Class A3 of EN 1793-1 for absorption."



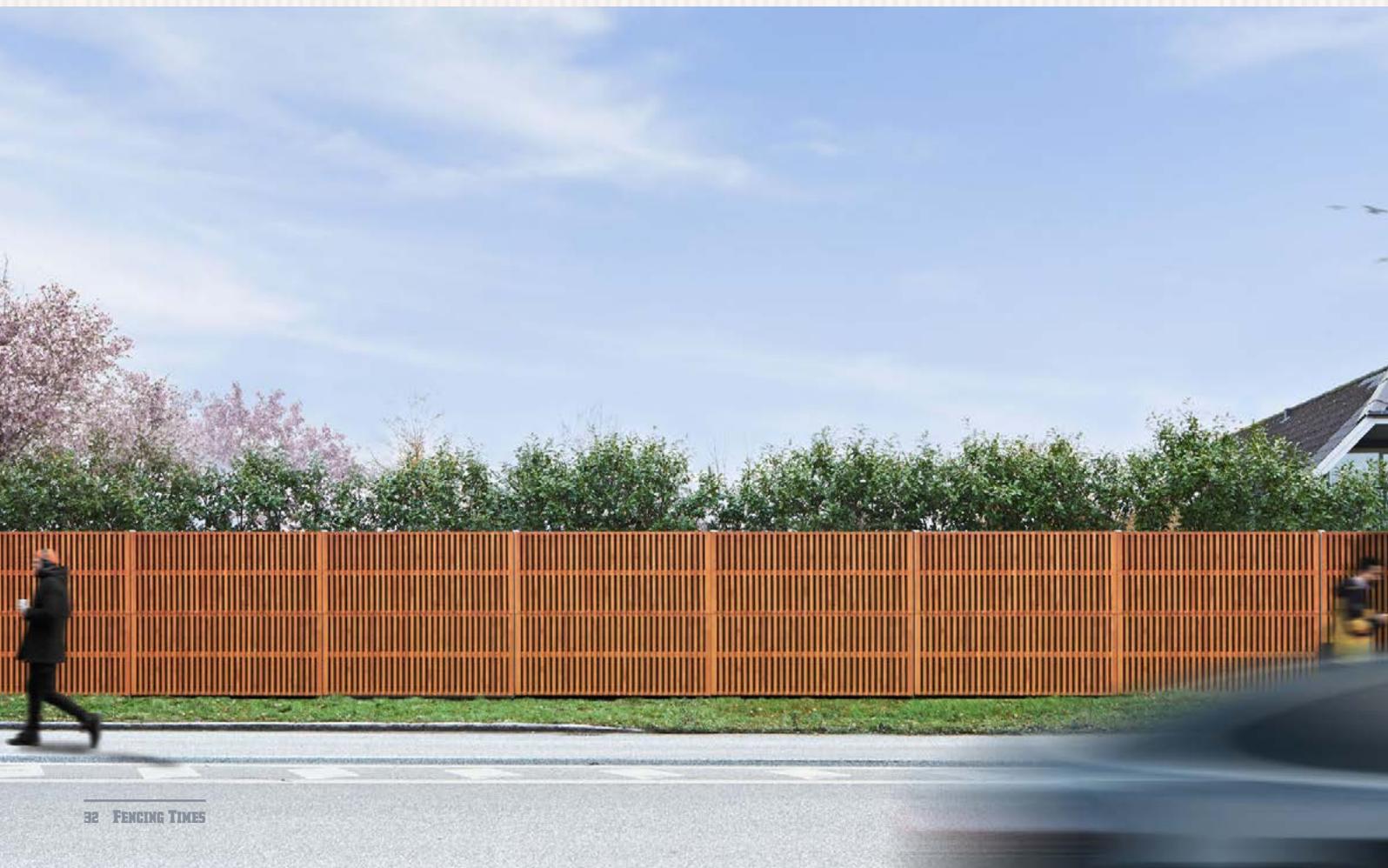
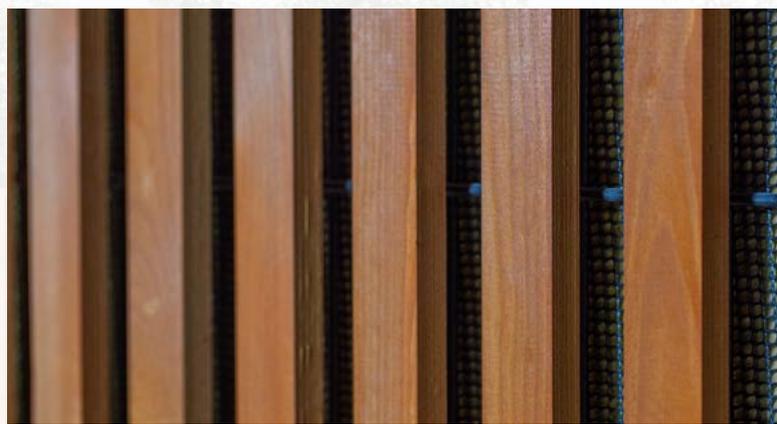
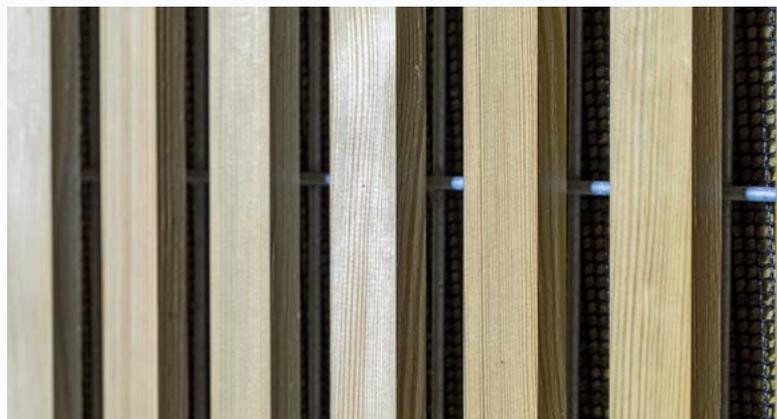
SPECIFICATIONS

Noistop Essential modules are 60 millimetres wide, with a mesh panel on each side. Against the mesh panel, there is a polyethylene net stretched on the inside. This protects the stone wool, while still allowing sound to pass through to be absorbed by the stone wool. The frame is hot-dip galvanised and can be powder-coated as required – the standard options are anthracite grey and jet black. The panels are 2400, 1800, 1200 or 600 millimetres long and 500, 900 or 1000 millimetres high. *“We selected the dimensions so that on one hand no stone wool is wasted, but on the other we’re still able to offer the customer an enormous amount of flexibility.”* For those who need a different panel length, there are special adjustment kits available that enable you to shorten a panel to the required length. The frames are installed between posts of 80 by 80 millimetres, with various thicknesses depending on the height of the fence. They are available with and without a base plate. To complete the range, Rockwool also supplies pedestrian gates in the Essential style. These are 1 metre wide and 1.80 or 2 metres high. *“All in all Noistop Essential provides materials for beautiful acoustic fences in heights up to 3 metres.”*



CLADDING

The wooden cladding is made of impregnated natural or brown pine wood. The frames match either the flange side or the module backside and fit together nicely. Rockwool has developed a new fixation kit to mount the wooden cladding on the fence. "It makes installation very easy," Anstötz says. "The hanger keeps the cladding in place, so you can level it without needing to hold the panel there. Once that's done, you can attach the panel with a couple of screws in predrilled holes. If, after a few years, the customer wants to stain, paint, or completely replace the panel, they can unscrew it again just as easily." According to Rockwool, the cladding has a typical lifespan of 10 to 15 years, depending on weather conditions and whether the wood is maintained regularly. "A little tip at the end," says Anstötz: "Using the wooden cladding for the encapsulation of garbage bins or storage places in the garden, ensures a homogen appearance together with the noise fence." ■




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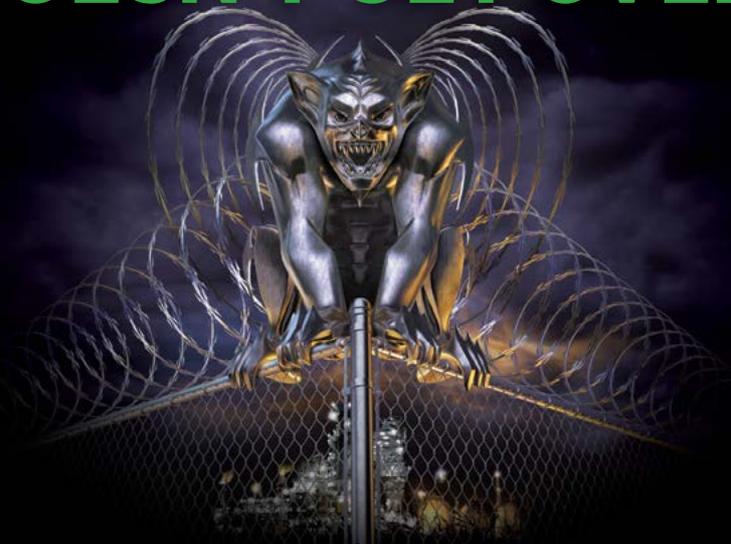


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According to a survey of 100 installers:

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Overwhelming majority advised that well over half of gates checked / maintained were 'unsafe by design'

62% believed the design errors are the responsibility of inappropriately trained installers



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Ebbe und Flut expands accessories range

Ebbe und Flut, a manufacturer of Friesian-style fencing from Sönnebüll in the German district of Nordfriesland, has expanded its range of accessories to include a standard range of letterboxes, intercoms and lighting.



“Until now we’ve usually prepared our gates to suit the client’s accessories,” owner and managing director Jan Christiansen says. “One client might work with intercoms from Came, while another prefers to sell AES or Farfisa. It meant that we had to request a different drill or cut-out template for every intercom. And with letterboxes it was the same – clients would order them somewhere, have them delivered to us, and we’d then build them into the gate, gatepost or fence. It was often a lot of fuss and required lots of organising. That’s why we now have our own range of accessories.”

A UND K

That accessory range includes letterboxes and parcel boxes from A und K of Grimma, near Leipzig in eastern Germany.

“A und K’s letterboxes are all made of stainless steel, with good drainage. We’ve had good experiences with them. We made a selection from their range and chose the models that go well with our gates. We now have standard strips and supports for those models, so we can integrate them seamlessly into our fences and gates. It means that we’re able to deliver them as an appealing complete package, ready-made, built-in and all.”





Jan Christiansen

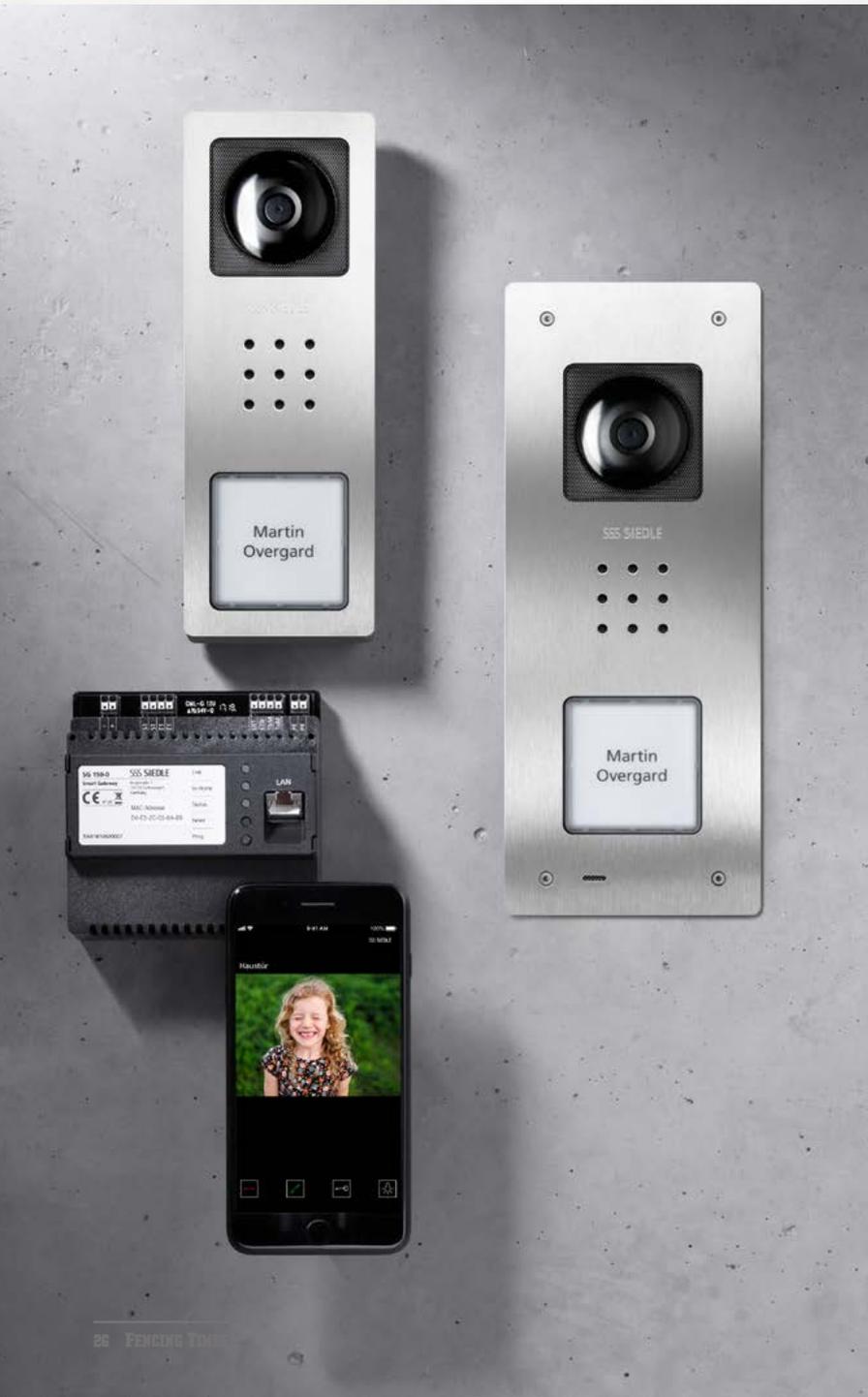


SIEDLE

For the intercoms, Ebbe und Flut chose Siedle from Furtwangen im Schwarzwald in southern Germany. "Siedle is top of the line," Christiansen says. "Their intercoms are sturdy and vandal-proof, they're highly weatherproof, and the technology and electronics are reliable. It's a good fit with our philosophy 'Once and for all'. We've chosen three intercoms from their range: a standard audio intercom with indoor and outdoor units, a video intercom with indoor and outdoor units, and a video intercom with a built-in SIM card that calls your mobile phone via Wi-Fi or Ethernet. We have the three sets in stock here, and we've standardised their installation."

LIGHTING

The third extension to the range involves post lighting. "We collaborated with a LED lighting manufacturer here in Nordfriesland for these," Christiansen says. "They make special plastic housings for us. We can install these on the front of an aluminium or stainless steel post, and the LED units fit into it perfectly. They look really good on gateposts, but they're also a great way to put lovely light accents on the outside of a longer stretch of fencing. You can use them to light pathways too."



TAILOR-MADE

The introduction of standardisation for intercoms and letterboxes doesn't mean that Ebbe und Flut will no longer install third-party accessories. *"Quite the opposite,"* Christiansen says. *"Fencing installers who want to sell their own intercoms or letterboxes are still able to send them to us and we'll build them in, but those who don't have a particular preference can save us a bit of work and in return, the delivery time will be shorter. It also means that those who don't have a regular supplier can easily sell some extra accessories."* ■





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WMT expands range of click-in holders

Werbe- und Metalltechnik Boenen, a fencing accessories manufacturer from Bönen, near Dortmund, has expanded its range of click-in holders. The company exhibited several new models at Perimeter Protection in Nuremberg.



The basis of every product in WMT's catalogue is a universal so-called 'click-in holder'. This is a stainless steel fixing that can be hung on a rigid mesh fence by simply clicking it in. The holder has different attachments depending on what you want to hang up. The fixings were devised by WMT owner Klaus Reimann, who developed them because he sold a lot of planters for outdoor use. "My planters are often powder-coated in a range of colours," he says. "A few times in a row I had customers who wanted to use them to brighten up their anthracite-grey fences. They asked whether I had a fixing to attach the planters to the fence with. That's when I made that fixing – and it was a big success. It meant that I sold more planters right away. Then almost immediately I realised that you could use the click-in holders for a whole lot of other things too."





RANGE

Over the past few years Reimann has built up an extensive range of holders. Brooms, dog bowls, letterboxes, umbrellas, flags, garden hoses, dustbins, bottles, lamps, satellite dishes, bicycles, and even a washing rack – you name it, Reimann has made a holder for it. “Some of the inventions are things that nobody needs,” he laughs. “I came up with them for fun, but we sell one once a year at most. But there are also holders that now sell really well. The letterbox holder, for example. There’s so much demand for it that we now include complete letterboxes in the range.”

NEW

The latest additions to the click-in holder range are a fence shelf, a fence table and a complete bird-feeding station. “The shelf is a sort of outdoor bookshelf,” Reimann says. “Obviously not intended for books, but for all sorts of other things like flower pots or decorative items. It means that customers can decorate their gardens in the same sort of way they might do the living room. The fence table is a slightly larger version of it. It’s made of perforated sheeting, so water doesn’t pool on it. You can put your keys on it, your cigarettes or your coffee cup. That’s handy not just for private gardens, but also for businesses where smokers have to go outside. And by the way, for them we also have a large outdoor ashtray, which you can turn over easily to empty.”



ADDITIONS

In addition to the new accessories, there are also additions to existing click-in holders. "For example, we already had click-in holders for wallboxes," Reimann says. "They sell really well too, because otherwise the customer would have to drill holes for them in the – sometimes really beautifully rendered – wall of their house. There are new models every year, and then the question is whether the next wallbox is going to fit into the holes from the old one. That's why we now make click-in holders for every wallbox model. We already have them for Elli, Easee and Hardy Barth brand boxes, and whenever customers need a holder for a model we don't yet have, we make it. The same goes for garden hose reels to a certain extent; customers often prefer not to drill holes in the wall for those either. We now have them for a lot of Gardena models, and one for the reels made by various other brands."

FENCE HOUSE

A cat flap is another new addition to the range. This, however, is not installed using a click-in holder, but with bolts that are inserted between the horizontal wires of a twin wire panel. In order to install it, a small piece of mesh must be cut out of the mesh panel. The flap consists of a frame containing a movable sheet of polycarbonate, which can be blocked in both directions. "It wasn't created with just cats and dogs in mind," Reimann says. "The flap means that the fence will no longer get in the way of hedgehogs and hares on their travels through the gardens."

The latest addition to the range is a so-called fence house. Made of stainless steel sheeting, it is designed to store dustbins or garden tools out of sight. "But the fence house is also ideal for firewood. If you put it against a fence, that serves as the back wall. You can order a partition and shelves with it, but you don't need to. We also have a planter unit that goes on top, which is ideal for herbs due to its working height."

DISPLAYS

None of the products in the WMT range are the typical products that a customer goes to a fencing installer for. "Most customers who buy a fence aren't aware of the other things you can do with it," Reimann says. "But when they see all the options there are, they often see the benefits right away. That's why we give a number of free demo models, powder coated in eye-catching colours, to every installer who wants to sell our range. The only condition is that they have a display garden and are prepared to put up two wire panels of 1.8 or 2 metres high. For those who want to take a bigger approach, we now have ready-made displays made of twin wire panels, with every possible option hanging on them. These give customers even more ideas, meaning even more additional business." ■





ZAUNHAUS mit Pflanzdach

ZAUNHAUS

New light column from Key Automation

Italian drive manufacturer Key Automation, from San Donà di Piave just outside Venice, launched a new light column this winter: the EGO Column. It can be used as a standalone garden light, but also serves as a support post for photocells, a key switch, or keypads.

“The EGO Column elaborates on our idea, which envisions gate automation and outdoor lighting as a single overall concept,” managing director and owner Nicola Michelin says. “The support posts that you need to place in the garden for photocells or switches, and the gate motors, are there doing nothing 99 percent of the time, so why not use them as a source of lighting during nighttime independently of the gate’s opening or keyboard usage?”

EGO

The new EGO Column is part of the EGO range, which also includes a keypad and a key switch. These devices are both available in standalone format, but can also be integrated into the column. “We’ve got a special clip for that,” Michelin says. “All you need to do is unscrew the unit’s backplate, and then you install the clip in its place. Then you use the clip to click the entire unit onto a rail in the aluminium profile on the column. The depth of the profile is exactly the same as the height of the switches, so the units are flush mounted and sit beautifully against the profile’s cover plate. This produces a really attractive result for the keypad in particular, as its front is completely smooth. All you see is a smooth surface, until you touch the screen.”







KEYPAD

The keypad and key switch in the EGO range are existing products, which until now were able to be used as surface-mounted switches. *“But we designed the range in its entirety from the start,”* Michelin says. *“We started back in 2018. The keypad in particular posed a technical challenge, as we wanted to create something completely different from the existing keypads on the market, by equipping the keypad with a touch panel with no buttons. It meant that we could make the surface completely smooth. But touch is really difficult outdoors, as obviously you can’t have the buttons responding to rain or wind, but they do need to react to the user’s fingers.”* The keypad has RGB backlighting; the customer can choose their preferred backlight colour. It comes in two versions: wired and wireless.

PHOTOCELLS

In addition to the switches, the new EGO Column can also incorporate the photocells from the Key Automation range. These, too, click onto the rail in the profile, but unlike the switches, they are installed behind the cover plate rather than integrated into it. *“We made the cover plate from black plastic, but it’s translucent,”* Michelin explains. *“The infrared light from the photocells passes through it, while the photocell itself cannot be seen at all. If you didn’t know any better you’d think it was just a garden light.”*



Nicola Michelin



NIGHT LIGHT SYSTEM

In addition to the recess on the front side for accessories, the EGO Column has recesses on both sides for LED strips. These have white plastic cover plates. *“Our entire range is based on the idea that gate drives and garden lighting go hand in hand,”* Michelin says. *“If you come home in the dark, you don’t just want the gate and the garage door to open for you, but you want your garden lights to switch on too – or already be switched on. From a technical point of view it makes sense to combine the two as well. You need to bring all sorts of electronics outdoors for the drives anyway. So what could be better than to offer the two applications in a single system? You can use the drive’s transformer to power the lighting, and use the controls to programme when the lighting turns on and off. It’s an ideal combination.”*

SPECIFICATIONS

The new EGO light column is made from a black-coated, extruded aluminium profile measuring 100 by 50 millimetres, and is available in two heights: 500 and 1000 millimetres. Each is available either with or without LED lighting, and they can also be used solely as support posts for accessories. *“The other way around is obviously an option too,”* says Michelin. *“They can also be sold just as a garden light. It’s a particularly good option if the customer only wants to have lights of the same model in their garden. Then you install a column with a touchpad outside, two columns with photocells inside, and then further along the driveway you have columns with lighting only. It produces a stunning end result.”* The EGO Column is supplied with a galvanised steel base plate, which can be fixed to the surface of the driveway or on a small foundation. ■





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Sonomuro expands into Benelux

Sonomuro, a Belgian manufacturer of sound barrier fencing based in Kontich, near Antwerp, is expanding its operations to the Netherlands and Belgium. All documentation is now available in Dutch, and a representative has been hired.

“**A**lthough we’re a Belgian company,” managing director Michel Corbett says, “until now we’ve mainly been active in France. Since the pandemic and since the large increase in the number of heat pumps in recent years, we’ve seen a big jump in demand for sound barrier fencing in the Netherlands and Belgium. That’s what we’re responding to now.”



SONOWALL

The cornerstone of the range is Sonomuro's own Sonowall, a fence made of wooden sound-absorbing panels installed between wooden or aluminium posts. The panels have a recycled polyurethane (flake foam) core and come in three options: Reflective, Absorb, and Double Side Absorb. The Reflective variant has panel walls made entirely of wooden slats, which are connected with a tongue and groove system. In Absorb, the slats are placed transversely at equal intervals to enable sound to penetrate deeply into the foam. "Depending on the application, it's either better to absorb the sound as much as possible or, conversely, reflect it as much as possible," Corbett says, "so we've created a variant for each purpose."

RANGE

Sonomuro also manufactures a so-called Sonokit. "It was created with heat pumps in mind," Corbett goes on. "If you put a fence too close to one – which is what we did initially – you run into problems with the supply and removal of hot and cold air. So we created a special enclosure, which keeps the sound inside it as much as possible but still lets the air currents pass through." The company is also working on a mobile noise barrier, which blocks more noise than a construction fence with a padded canvas against it but is just as easy to move. "We've already made a lot of progress on it; I'll come back to it soon." And finally, in Belgium Sonomuro is also an importer for Danish company Pilebyg, a company that makes sound barriers from willow branches and has had them certified for highway use.



Michel Corbett



ON A PLATE

Sonomuro aims to serve installers in Belgium and the Netherlands with ready-made leads and plenty of advice. *“We want to be more than just the twenty-seventh fencing manufacturer asking if you want to sell its fences,” Corbett says. “Our website attracts a lot of visitors searching Google for noise nuisance solutions. We learned how to handle that in France. It leads to a lot of enquiries, from the Benelux countries as well now, which we start by filtering thoroughly. Someone who lives 5 metres from a motorway and wants perfect silence in his garden isn’t someone we can help. But all the leads that we can do something with, we forward to our fencing partners based around the area of that lead. In that respect it’s business on a plate.”*

SUPPORT

“On top of that, in France in recent years we’ve gained a huge amount of experience with the way sound rolls through the environment,” Corbett continues. “Where does sound come from? At which location behind the fence is the most silence required? In some cases you can get big results by making the fence 2.4 or 3 metres high. Is it worth getting a customer to go to the trouble of applying for a permit for that high fence? Or doesn’t it make much difference? We’re able to answer those types of questions perfectly. We took on Yannick Jacobs for that, and used all our experience from the past 10 years to train him extensively. Since this winter he’s been the contact point for installers in Belgium and the Netherlands.” ■



Yannick Jacobs





In addition to being a fencing installer, Livia Graf is a photographer. Whenever her guys finish off a project, she drives to it and takes stunning fencing photos. This is one of them.



Safety considerations for sliding gates

Part 2

In the previous column, as part of our *Gate Safety by Design series*, we focused on the importance of end stops to prevent a sliding gate from over travelling. To reiterate: risk assessment is key to stop gates over travelling and design and construction of the gate is the first place to start. Eliminating the safety and construction risks from the gate design in the first instance will make for an inherently safer system that will also require less additional or safety features fitted on the gate when it is finally commissioned.

Since falling gates have represented such a high proportion of accidents in the last 10 years, we wanted to provide further detailed practical guidance to help installers adopt the best safety protocol to avoid any further incidents.

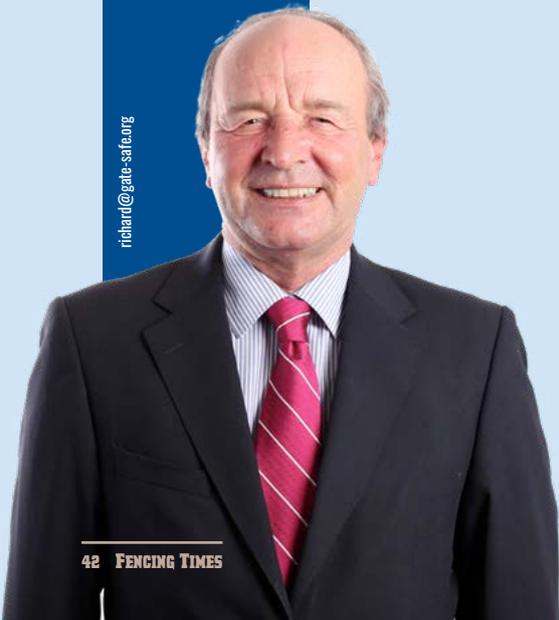
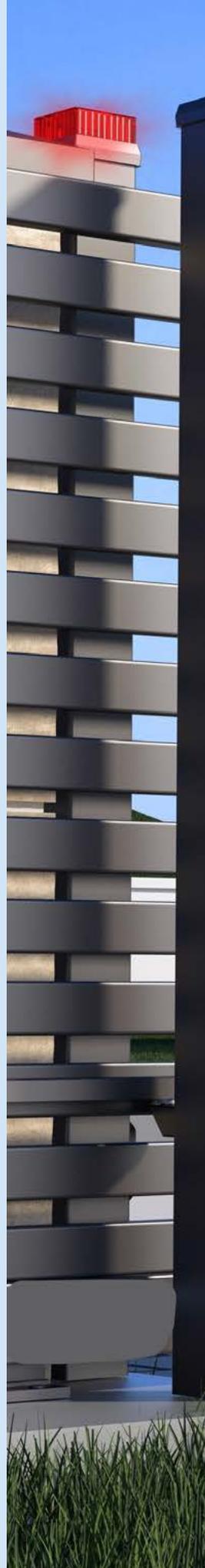
GATE SUPPORT POSTS

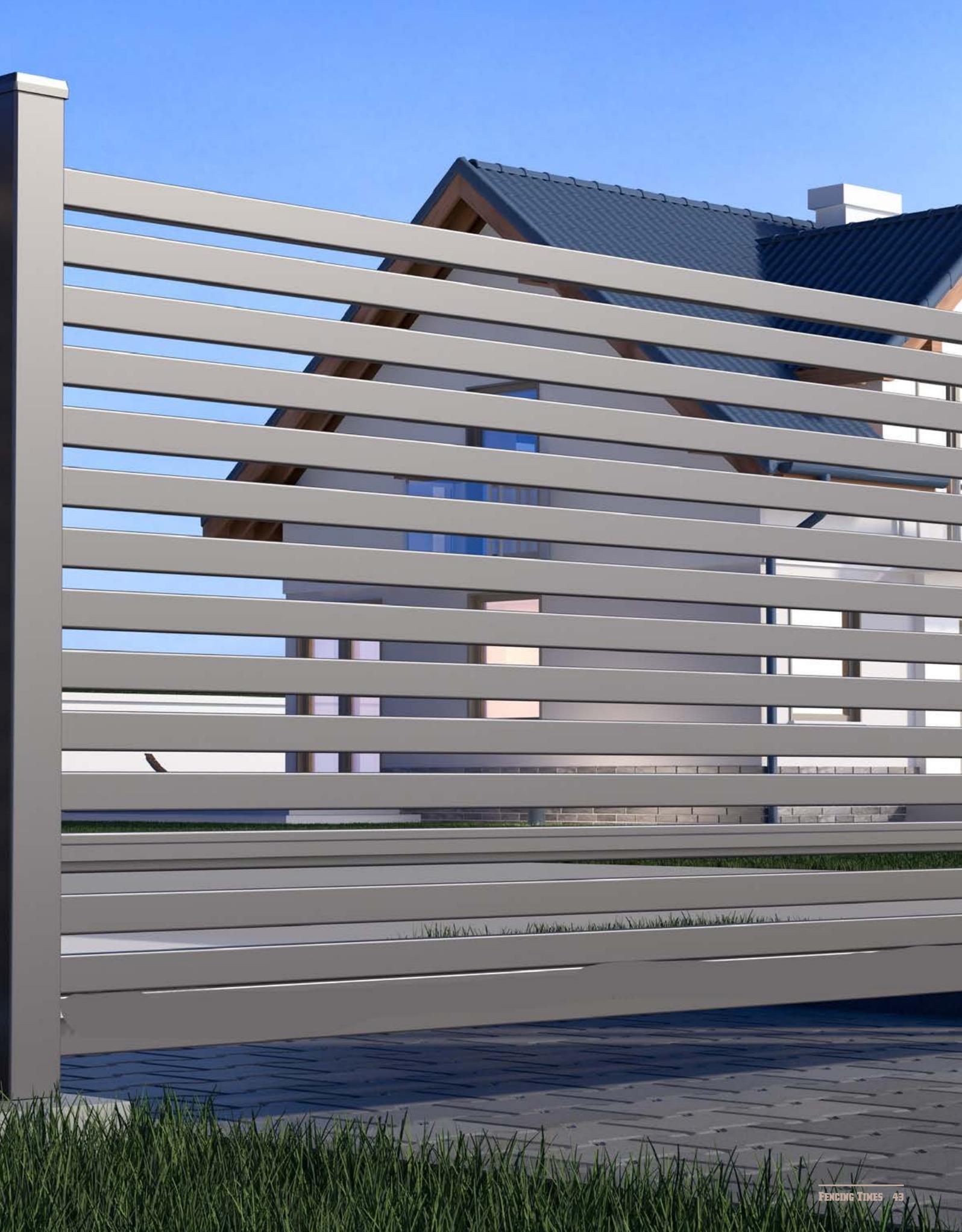
Ideally the gate should be supported between two goal post type supports or at least two hanging or suspension posts. This style of design will prevent the gate falling flat due to one component such as the roller breaking and causing a serious injury to anyone near the gate.

Richard Jackson

For many years, Richard Jackson was responsible for running English fencing business H.S. Jackson & Son. Based in Ashford, Kent, it's one of the largest fencing companies in the UK. In 2010, after separate gate accidents took the lives of two children in quick succession, Richard founded Gate Safe, a charity dedicated to increasing gate safety. In 2012 he handed the reins of Jacksons Fencing to his brother Peter, freeing himself to focus entirely on Gate Safe.

richard@gate-safe.org





CORRECT FITTING OF ACTUATORS

Limit switches and their associated actuators or flags are probably the most common way that sliding gates are given their fully open and closed positions. These rely on the flags being positioned in the correct place, but importantly they must be secure to prevent them falling off because of vibration or physical contact.

We would recommend not only relying on the grub screw biting into the racking, but to fit an extra Tek screw or similar to deliver a much more solid and secure fixing that will guarantee that the flag cannot become detached from the gate. If the flag does detach, the limit switch will not be activated and the gate will over travel and will then be totally reliant on a strong physical stop.

PHYSICAL STOPS

It is essential that the physical stop in both opening and closing direction is capable of doing the job properly. If using the end plates on sliders that have internal rollers or wheels in the running tube, do not use screws to hold the end covers in place as

these can easily be broken if the gate is running at full power. Instead, weld the end plates to ensure maximum strength and security. Make sure that channels that have support rollers running in them have strong end caps that are also welded in place. Consider if there is any possibility that the gate rollers could over or under ride the end stops, and then take the relevant steps to mitigate this – by fitting larger rollers. Ensure the roller fills the entire space within the channel and that there are sufficient end stops within the design to prevent the roller passing beyond its intended open or closed position. Ideally the roller should fill enough of the channel to prevent movement.

After determining the desired travel distance, fit the racking so it stops just after the limit switch would activate. This way if the limit switch fails, the gate would lose drive beyond this point and therefore would be rendered incapable of any over travel while the motor was running. 'No rack, No drive'. Of course, this would have no effect if the gate was in manual release, so it is not a substitute for strong physical end stops. ■



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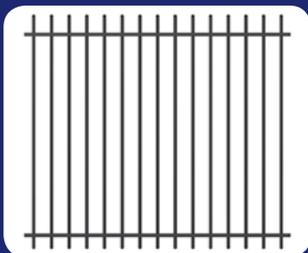
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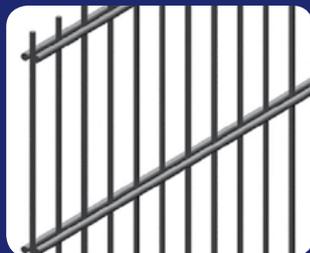
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LET'S GO HIGH-TECH

Creating additional response time, invisibly

Everything you need to know about perimeter detection: ground detection



rajmond@fencingtimes.com

Ground detection systems have been used successfully for many years now in the highest risk and security situations. They only really have advantages. The only thing you could truly call a drawback is the fact that the purchase price is considerable. This is because there is a lot of ground work involved. It's a pricey investment, but you really do get something for your money. Once the system has been installed, it will provide excellent service for decades, as long as it's properly maintained.

Ground detection systems have a probability of detection of almost one hundred percent. What this means is that every(!) attempt to enter the premises will be detected. At the same time the so-called False Alarm Ratio (usually abbreviated to FAR) is virtually zero, so there won't be any unnecessary alerts from the system. This is because ground detection systems are not in the least bit sensitive to weather conditions. Whether there's rain, storm, hail, snow or fog, it won't get the system confused.

But as soon as someone crosses the detection field – whether walking, crawling, jumping, rolling, or anything else – this will trigger an alert. You can have blind faith in that. And the word 'blind' leads us to another major advantage: these systems are invisible and untraceable, because they're hidden in the ground. That also means that an intruder can't manipulate or sabotage it. He doesn't even know that the system is there, so he can't come up with a plan to get past it. And in fact the intruder is often under the illusion that nobody knows he's there and he feels like he's got all time in the world, even though he has long since been spotted and the police or security staff are already on their way.

So thanks to their invisibility, ground detection systems almost always provide extra response time. And as you may remember from my first column, response time is an important value in the security factor – because the shorter this time is, the less damage there will be.

There are two types of ground detection systems on the market: passive and active. A passive system does nothing itself; it waits for the pressure differences that occur as soon as intruders enter the site. These pressure differences are picked up by liquid-filled tubes, or by fibreglass mats. An active system, however, makes an active effort to detect intruders. It does this by creating an electromagnetic field, and then waiting for that field to be disrupted. This is the same technique as the one used by the bistatic microwave detectors discussed in my previous column.

This active system is also known as a 'leaky coax system'. It consists of two coaxial cables that are laid underground. These coaxial cables have small holes in them; the openings are needed to transmit and receive a radio frequency. The two cables are laid parallel in the ground, approximately a metre apart. One cable serves as the transmitter cable and the other as the receiver.

An electromagnetic detection field is created between the two cables. The underlying technology that connects the coaxial cables is able to analyse any disruption of sufficient mass and of a certain speed. If these two values exceed a certain threshold, then an alert is triggered. What this means is that rabbits and the neighbour's cat don't have enough mass to trigger an alert, but an adult intruder does. Because the technology in the system is very similar to the radio wave detection discussed previously, we also need the same conditions. Hopefully you remember what it was: space!



The total width of the detection field is around 3 metres. There cannot be any obstacles within this strip – no skips, trucks, pallets, garden furniture, Rolls Royces... nothing. For this reason, active systems are almost only used in situations where it's actually possible to keep that 3-metre-wide strip clear. At prisons, military bases or other high-risk locations, this clear strip is safeguarded by erecting two fences.

In the private sector, it's more difficult to keep a strip clear like that. Try telling that Forbes billionaire that he can't park his Bentley in a certain spot because there's a detection field there. You won't have any luck, even though it's for his own safety. Then, in his eyes, the system is useless. For billionaires like this the passive system is a much better fit, but more on that later.

A very big advantage of the active system is that can be used in all types of terrains. Garden soil, grass, gravel, bricks, concrete, asphalt, anything – there are no restrictions at all. The depth at which the cables are laid does need to be adjusted according to the sound conductivity of the ground. For example, the installation depth in garden soil and grass is around 20 cm, and in concrete or asphalt around 6 cm.

In addition to a detection width, there is also a detection height of about one metre. This means that the intruder will be detected even if he doesn't touch the ground (although I don't know how he'd manage this, especially since he wouldn't know exactly where the detection field begins and ends). This is a fundamental difference to the

passive systems we'll discuss later, where the ground must be touched to create a difference in pressure. With active systems this is not strictly necessary. Even if the intruder goes swinging between the two fences like Tarzan, he will be detected. Digging underneath the cables won't work either, as the detection field extends under the cables too. This makes it almost impossible to get past an active ground detection system unseen.

The large detection field does mean that when installing it, you need to make sure that you keep at least one metre away from rainwater drains and similar, because running water is a moving mass too and will also trigger an alert.

Just as with the bistatic microwave detectors, you can detect movements over a great distance with a single detector. The coaxial cables act as antennas. They are connected to a so-called evaluation unit. This analyser is often concealed above-ground in a field cabinet, and requires a power supply. The unit can monitor some 400 metres of perimeter to both the left and the right of where it is located, i.e. a total of 800 metres. Placing multiple units consecutively means that the detection distances are effectively unlimited. You just need a field cabinet with power and communication cables every 800 metres. It is worth noting that the cabinet doesn't necessarily need to be outdoors; it can also be located in a protected enclosed indoor space. The portion leading towards the perimeter is then bridged using special non-sensitive cable.



Both active and passive systems can be installed under various surfaces; they can operate under a lawn, as well as under paving

Another great advantage of the active system is that thanks to the software used with this technology, that 800-metre-long perimeter can be divided into, for example, fifty different alarm zones. This can be done to the nearest metre. This is ideal if there is video observation as well, with pan and tilt cameras. If there is an alert, they immediately turn to a pre-programmed zone and zoom in. The security guard has the right alarm image on his or her screen immediately. This process is fully automated. The ground detection software and the camera software 'talk' to each other using a particular protocol. It makes the job of the security guard in the control room much easier (just hope they don't fall asleep). In this way it's also easy to switch a zone off temporarily, for example if access to a sluice is required, or something similar. Then there's no need to switch off the whole 800 metres of ground detection when someone comes to pick up the rubbish.

As you can see from all of this, ground detection systems are primarily intended for the truly high-risk market, where you don't have to count your pennies to cover security costs. By the way, this only applies to the purchase price, as there are hardly any maintenance costs involved with ground detection. The cables in the ground don't need any maintenance. Just checking and testing the central equipment on a regular basis is enough.

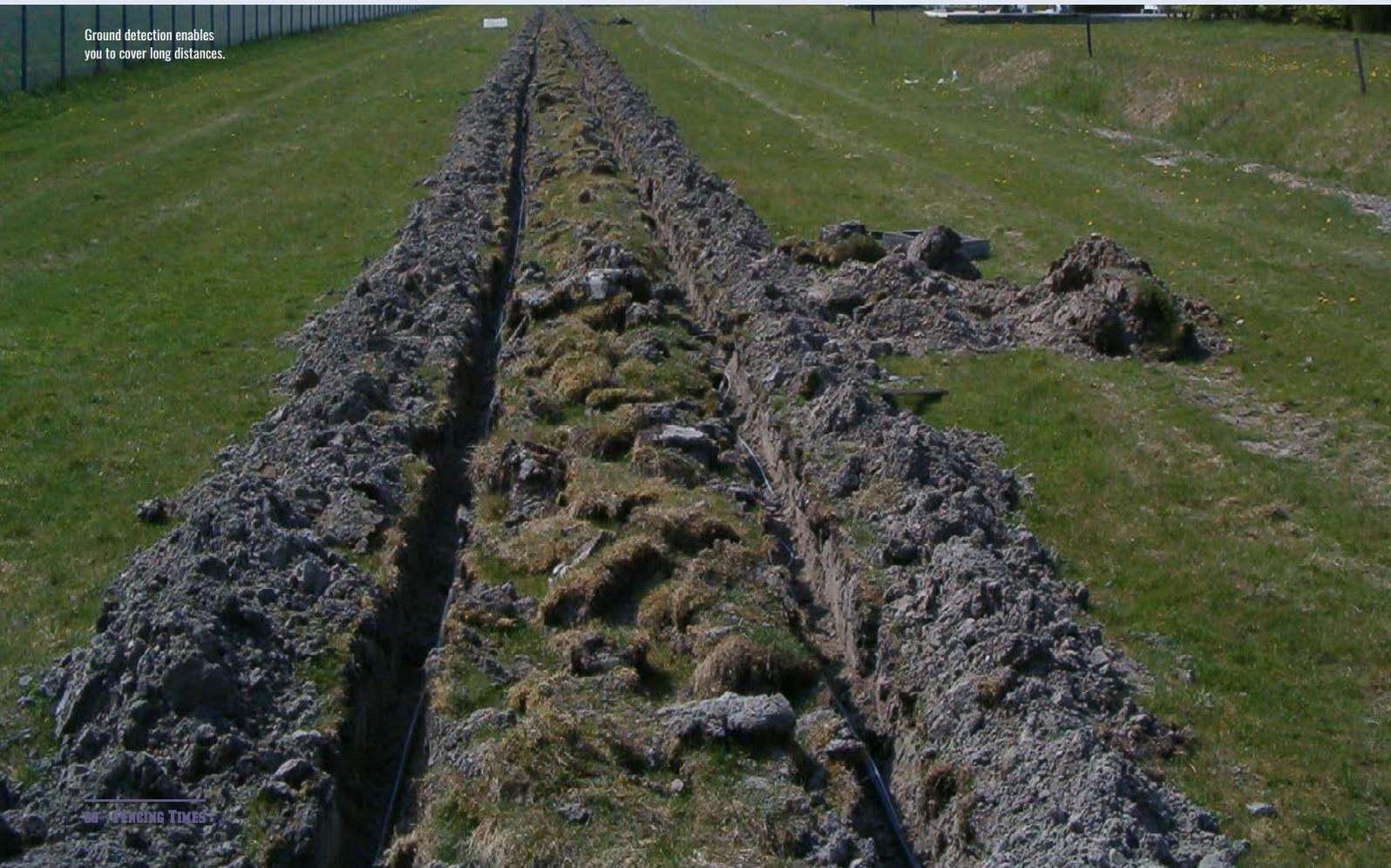
For the sake of completeness I should mention that these days there are also systems in which the transmitter and receiver cable are housed in a single cable, the so-called monocable. Other than that the system operates in exactly the same way, but the detection field is smaller. Naturally it saves on installation costs, because you now only need to dig a single channel.

This type of monocable system is ideal for temporary security measures. You roll out a cable around the object that needs to be protected, connect it to the central equipment, and you're done. Think of Air Force One, for example, standing on its own at an airport for a day. A monocable can be used to create a detection field very quickly, one which immediately registers curious busybodies. After all, the military police are people too, and sometimes want to take a nosy look at things (right, Rob?).

The last option can't be done with passive systems. They really do have to be buried in the ground, as they operate on pressure differences. As soon as a person enters the detection field, they cause pressure differences in the ground by walking, jumping, or crawling. Because even when you crawl on asphalt or brick paving, you cause pressure differences. The detection equipment picks up on these, no matter how small they are. It's only under concrete that these pressure differences aren't transmitted through to the soil, but that's the only exception.

It's therefore an essential requirement of passive systems that the intruder actually touches the ground. If he knows exactly where the detection field begins and ends, he can jump over it – all he needs to do is to stay a centimetre above the ground. In practice, though, it's impossible to see where the system is located, because a very big advantage of the passive systems is that once installation is completed, the detection field looks no different from the area outside it. There's no need to leave a detection strip free, as is required for active systems. All an intruder can see is a beautifully landscaped garden with flower beds, a terrace, and gravel paths. Even if he knows that there's a detection system, he can't see where it is.

Ground detection enables you to cover long distances.



A passive system can go meandering under the lawn, under a rose bed or even under the terrace. The aforementioned Forbes billionaire can even park his Bentley on top if he wants to. Once it's switched on, the system will operate normally. If someone walks around the Bentley, then security will be alerted. In fact, even if someone were to lift the Bentley with a helicopter, an alert would be sent. The passive ground detection systems are the only type of field detection systems that don't mean a loss of space. This is definitely a very big advantage.

A forwarding agent can park his trucks right up to his gate. The ground detection system is underneath. If the trucks are parked at night and the system is turned on, there will be an alert if someone walks between them. This system is very popular for projects where space is at a premium, or where pallets or containers are moved around on a regular basis. The client doesn't need to think about what to put where; the security system just keeps on working. Another place you often see this type of system is where there is great value is placed on the external features of the surroundings. The client wants to be well-protected, but it can't look like a prison. Examples include museums, embassies (with or without their residences), and of course important, well-known or wealthy people in their mansions.

There are two well-known passive systems on the market. One of these works with tubes, which are filled with liquid. The other system consists of fibreglass mats. These are thin mats that look like a type of root cloth. Fibreglass filaments are randomly orientated in the cloth, and light is transmitted through them. The mats are invisibly installed under surfaces such as grass, bricks, tiles, decking or gravel. When walked on there is a difference in pressure, which bends the fibreglass mat and disrupts the light beams. You could compare it to a garden hose: when you stand on it, less water comes out of the end.

The analyser or central unit to which the mat is connected is the actual sensor. This sensor is able to register the difference between light emitted and light received, and can therefore measure differences in pressure ranging from a few grams to tons. It's a question of adjusting the settings. It depends on the weight of the ground covering, but on average the mats are buried around 8 to 10 centimetres below ground level. The mat itself is very lightweight and is usually 1.2 metres in width; about as wide as the average tiled path or pavement. One sensor unit is required every 75 square metres; these are usually located indoors. The portion leading to outdoors is then bridged using non-sensitive cable.

In practice this means that a new unit is required every 40 to 50 metres, each with a field cabinet and power supply. That makes this system somewhat less suitable for use as true perimeter ground detection. For a small project, before long you have hundreds of metres of perimeter to secure. The further away from the building you put a ground detection system, the more response time you have, remember?



Angles and bends pose no problems for ground detection.

So this system is better suited to installation under a terrace, under a path to the front door, at the back door, under the driveway where the car is parked, or on the balcony or flat roof. Basically at all openings at the façades, which are by definition a building's weak points.

There is also a system especially for roof applications, where the fibreglass mats are hidden in the roofing. These mats are completely waterproof and UV-resistant. There's no need to cover the entire roof with these mats, by the way; a 1.2-metre strip along the edge of the flat roof will be sufficient for normal risks. This width wasn't chosen at random: when walking normally, you can assume that at least one step will always land on the mat, creating a pressure difference. The dimensions of the mats can always be adapted to the project if necessary. For example, you could have a mat made especially for a skylight. If you have a flat roof it is important to make sure that there is good drainage, or the mat will not detect pressure differences during severe frost.

Because fibreglass mats are so ultra-thin, they can also be used indoors and laid under carpets, laminate or parquet floors. The system can measure the pressure not only when entering but also when leaving, a unique feature that presents additional possibilities for detection. For example imagine a museum with an expensive vase displayed on a stand. As soon as a burglar picks up the vase, it sets off an alarm. I've seen the system demonstrated where it had been installed under a piece of laminate flooring, on top of which a football was placed. We had the opportunity to stand next to the flooring and try to remove the ball without setting off the alarm. No one managed it.

Similarly, in the renovated Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, I was very curious to see what would happen if I were to take a single step over the cord behind which a Dutch Master was hanging. I couldn't see any electronics. To be honest, during these types of visits I'm much more interested in that than in the art on the wall, crazy specialist that I am. Within 10 seconds the security guard was right behind me. There was almost certainly a fibreglass mat under the floor behind the cord (obviously the security guard wasn't going to tell me). My wife, of course, had quickly moved on; she'd already seen what was coming. Just as with all other detection systems based on light and fibreoptic technology, this system is not at all susceptible to electromechanical interference from, for example, thunderstorms. The system also can't be measured with external equipment, and therefore can't be found. If heavy weights are going to be placed on top of the system, it's important to ensure a good base or foundation. The mat cannot be allowed to sag over time, so this needs to be taken into account. The mats are completely maintenance-free; only the central equipment needs to be checked and tested each year. One disadvantage is that fibreglass mats are difficult to repair. Once they've been damaged, say because the gardener stuck a spade through them, they can't be repaired on-site. In practice this means that a new mat will need to be purchased and installed.

For this reason you usually see this type of mat covered by some type of tiles, bricks, gravel or wood. They are less often used under grass and soil, as the shallow installation depth can quickly result in damage.

In contrast, the tube system is buried more deeply and is therefore perfectly suitable for use under lawns. But as mentioned earlier, it can be used in any type of soil and under any surface, even asphalt. The only exception is concrete. With this system, two tubes are buried parallel to each other, around 1.5 metres apart, at a depth of about 20 to 30 centimetres. These tubes, with a diameter of about 3 centimetres, are filled with a liquid. It's usually an environmentally-friendly liquid, but the point is that it cannot freeze. The pressure in the tubes is increased to 5 bar. Every 100 metres, the tubes come together in a well to one side, where they are connected by a pressure valve. This pressure valve has a diaphragm that ensures that the pressure in both tubes is equalised again after, for example, a truck has driven over it. This takes a few seconds, but due to the physical law of communicating vessels, the pressure in the tubes will equalise again afterwards... even if you put a 10-ton shipping container on top and leave it there. On the other side of the 100 metres the tubes come together in another well, where they are connected to a sensor. This sensor has two chambers similar to the human heart. The sensor is able to measure the difference in pressure and in time between the two chambers.

Here, fibreglass mats are being installed under decking.



If an intruder runs across the tubes, he first creates a pressure difference in tube 1 and chamber 1, which is picked up by the sensor. Then the pressure in tube 2 and chamber 2 changes. Together the pressure difference and the intervening time mean that there is a movement, which triggers an alert.

There are almost never false alarms here either. All weather affects both tubes simultaneously. There is a difference in pressure, but no difference in time, and therefore no alert is triggered. The system is extremely sensitive, especially if, after installation, the soil is well compacted again and makes good contact with the tubes. I always compare it to this: if you're in a bath full of water and you put your ear underwater, you hear all the sounds in the whole house. Water is very good at transporting vibrations; better than air. The system is based on this principle. Any contact with the ground, including a person crawling, causes vibrations that the liquid in the tubes picks up and transports to the sensor. Yes, even under asphalt or paving. That makes this system the perfect invisible perimeter detection for the logistics sector. Trucks and containers can park on top of it. No space is lost. And yet there is still detection.

The system is usually adjusted in such a way that it only triggers an alert at weights of around 40 kilograms. This prevents alerts from small game and other animals.

For ground detection, two cables (active system) or two tubes (passive system) are buried in the ground parallel to each other.



Covering a roof with fibreglass mats.



But for high-risk security targets, where the system is placed between two wire mesh fences, this threshold goes down so that any crawling creature will definitely be detected. The detection width is about installation clearance, about 3 to 4 metres. It depends a bit on how well the soil is compacted. The best compaction here is to simply leave the project exposed to the elements for around 6 months, and only then to finalise it.

The beauty of it is that if you put the tubes a bit closer together, then the detection width is also narrower. So you can play around with that if you need to for whatever reason. For example, in a narrow lane right next to the neighbours. You can also create bends and angles as desired (but this can be done with the active system too). It can also be used to good effect in hilly terrain, on a slope or even under a pond. The only thing to look out for is tall, narrow trees that move a lot in the wind. You need to stay 3 to 4 metres away from them. When the trees sway a lot in the wind, the roots sway with them. This causes vibrations in the ground that are detected by the liquid in the tubes.

Because it's a passive system, there's no need to do anything to maintain the surroundings. If you want to let the grass grow to a metre high, go right ahead. If someone walks through it, it will trigger an alert. And naturally this applies to shrubbery or other greenery too. This is an advantage of the system that should not be underestimated, and a big difference from active systems, especially when there are large perimeter lengths involved. The maintenance costs for the surrounding area are zero. The pressure in the tubes should be checked every year though. The softening of the rubber in the tubes makes them expand a little over time, which comes at the expense of the pressure. If the pressure gets too low, a fault alarm will be triggered. This system has an extremely long lifespan. Of course the sensor can give

out, but it is located in a well and therefore easy to replace. The tubes themselves really do last for decades. I know systems that are more than 30 years old, and they still work flawlessly. It makes for a very reasonable cost of ownership.

Are there no disadvantages at all? The only drawback may come about if there is severe frost. If severe frost continues for a longer period of time and the frost penetrates deeper than 30 centimetres into the ground, the chance of detection is reduced. The sensitivity then needs to be increased. If there is severe frost for so long that the ground starts to look like concrete even at a depth of 30 centimetres, then despite increased sensitivity there will be no detection at all. This situation hardly ever arises in western Europe, but it could cause problems in the Scandinavian countries or high in the Alps. I know a system especially for those areas, where there are heating ribbons laid alongside the tubes, preventing the ground freezing. In that case, however, the big advantage that invisibility gives you is lost when it freezes. When it snows, the system works without problems.

This system also allows the creation of alarm zones that are linked to a video system. The zones are accurate to within 10 metres. But there's something else, too: because the system also picks up signals in the metres before the intruder reaches the truly sensitive area, you have the option of doing something with these signals. The system suspects, as it were, that something or someone is coming. This is what we in the profession call a 'pre-alarm'. We can use this alert to send a pre-signal so that, for example, pan and tilt cameras can move into their programmed positions and the image is displayed on a security guard's screen (giving them a chance to wake up if they need to). The central equipment that communicates with the various sensors in the wells can be housed in a utility room. All that is needed is to run a power supply and communication cable from that room to



the first well with the sensors. From there, the power supply and communication cable runs from well to well. This can be laid at the same time as the tubes. The perimeter lengths are usually around 400 to 800 metres, but more than 10 kilometres can be protected with a single system if required. It is thus a true perimeter detection system, in contrast with the fibreglass mats.

Particularly with the passive systems, it's important to make a note of exactly where the system is located. Because there is no strip that has to be kept clear, after a while it's difficult – especially in a lovely garden or park-like surroundings – to see exactly where the system is located. For the annual maintenance, you need to visit the sensors and pressure valves in the wells. If you haven't documented the location properly, it can easily take 15 to 30 minutes to find a well. You have one every 100 metres, so it could end up costing you a lot of time. The mansion's residents won't be too happy either, if you go wandering around their expensive architect-designed garden with your pickaxe. The tubes are made of a type of reinforced rubber, but at 5-bar pressure you can put a hole in them with a spade or a tent peg from a marquee. On a regular basis, we see that even gardeners who have been involved in the installation end up putting a shovel right through a tube after a few years. Damage like this can be repaired just as you would a garden hose: with two hose clamps and a coupling. Obviously, though, the system needs to be vented and pressurised again afterwards.

The passive system with tubes is very commonly used in the private sector and is actually the only good answer to kidnapping and home invasions. Wealthy or well-known individuals are scared of experiencing a violent robbery at home in their luxurious mansions. They want to be well-protected, without making their stately homes and gardens look like prisons. This system is often the solution.

The location of the tubes and cables can't be seen after installation.

A tube system will be installed in the lawn behind the gate.



Placing this system as far away from the house as possible, close to the perimeter of the often very large gardens, creates additional response time. Any would-be intruders in the garden, who are still getting their bearings or perhaps waiting for the right moment to strike, will still feel safe, while the residents have already been given an indication that something's not right. They can use this advantage (the system can easily give them an extra minute of response time) to retreat into a strongroom that can hold back even intruders using extreme violence for 15 to 20 minutes. That's enough time to call security or the police and to avoid being confronted by the home invaders. Because that's the ultimate goal: to avoid physical confrontation. Material damage can be insured against. Emotional damage caused by kidnapping cannot.

This emotional damage can also be caused by residents experiencing false alarms too often, which constantly confronts them with the threat of danger. Plus, of course, it is also disruptive to keep having to hide in the strongroom. This is another reason why passive tube systems are well suited for private use: they very rarely raise false alarms. These two advantages mean that wealthy individuals are also willing to spend the money for such a system. As I began this column: it's a pricey investment, but you really do get something for your money. To give you an idea: if you have a block of land measuring 100 by 100 metres and therefore need to secure 400 metres of perimeter, you're looking at the cost of a luxury car from the top-class German segment. But this system will last longer than that car, I know that for sure. ■

A cover can be used for access to the maintenance wells. For applications with a higher threat level, the wells are located more deeply so they cannot be seen from outside. This means that they need to be dug up if maintenance is required. Good documentation comes in handy here.



FENCES IN THE NEWS



26 JULY 2023

Elderly Germans report each other over old fence



Not the woman from the story and not the fence from the story .

In Sonthofen, a town in the deep south of Germany, an 84-year-old resident made a complaint about his neighbour for replacing an old, dilapidated fence on their common boundary with a new

one. According to the woman, also no youngster at 74 years of age, the old fence belonged to her and the neighbour should not have simply disposed of it. When the Sonthofen Polizei came to interview the man, he

showed a statement agreeing to replacement of the old fence signed by both parties. The male neighbour in turn has now made a complaint against the female neighbour for making false accusations. Here in

the editorial office we have a different solution: set the age of retirement in Germany to at least 90, because it would seem that German senior citizens have way too much free time on their hands. ■

Robbie Williams builds high fence between his house and that of Jimmy Page



Robbie Williams' house at 31 Melbury Road can hardly be seen through the tall trees. Jimmy Page's house is next to it on the left (behind the little black car). Photo: Google Streetview.

We never thought we'd turn tabloid, but it's beginning to seem so. Because this item is about an escalating dispute between Led Zeppelin founder Jimmy Page – third best guitarist in the world after Jimi Hendrix and Eric Clapton according to Rolling Stone Magazine – and singer Robbie Williams. As it happens, they both own a mansion in West London, on neighbouring plots. Jimmy Page has been living here since 1972, while Robbie Williams arrived later.

The dispute began in 2015, when Williams submitted plans for a major renovation. These plans included building a 'super basement' under the house with an indoor swimming pool and fitness suite, plus underground access to the main house. The Led Zeppelin rocker has been fighting

those plans ever since, as he fears that vibrations from the building work could ruin fragile old paintings and frescoes at his property.

Robbie Williams has now submitted a new planning application. This time it's for building a 6-metre high fence along the entire boundary with Jimmy Page's plot. The application states that: 'There are significant height differences within the plot, making the existing wall too low and allowing passers-by to view the garden. As part of a landscape plan, the architect proposes the use of lattice panels to improve privacy in the garden. These will be fixed to the inside of the garden wall, or – where there are no tree root protection zones – to posts set in the ground. These will be installed with retention of the

existing planting and will be powder coated in dark grey. In our opinion, this intervention will have a negligible effect on the property's heritage value, while offering the occupants more privacy when using the garden.' There's no mention of the obvious fact that the new fence also spoils Jimmy Page's view.

Despite the objections from Page, Williams' earlier renovation plans were apparently approved by the council on condition that the builders use '19th-century hand tools' and 50,000 pounds worth of monitoring equipment to ensure that noise nuisance is minimized.

If the council also approves the new fence, it won't be long before our readers in West London will be able to compete for a nice job. ■

Canadian school children make wooden fish for fence

In Delta, a Canadian town just outside Vancouver, children from the local junior school participated in April in the Fish on Fences project of the Stream of Dreams, a Canadian non-profit organization for maintaining good water quality in Canada's streams, rivers and lakes. They painted wooden fish, which were then made part of the fence around the school by volunteers. They were also given information by Nathan 'Kaanaax Kuwoox' Wilson, an indigenous cultural mentor for the Stream of Dreams project. He emphasized the importance of keeping streams clean for salmon and other aquatic creatures. He also told them about the importance of salmon in indigenous culture and its connection to the local community. As school director

Tricia Stec Skillings told the local press, "This programme is a great way to encourage students to make a positive impact on the environment – while creating an artistic legacy for the community. All storm drains lead to fish and wildlife habitats, so we hope our Fish on Fences artwork will act as a valuable reminder for people to be extra careful about what ends up in the drains in their neighbourhood." Here in the editorial team, we're never really in favour of (school) children being used for (what are usually very left-wing) propaganda purposes, but then again Canadian salmon always tastes good and good water quality is in everyone's interest. Moreover, in this instance, it also provides nice pictures of fences, so onwards and upwards. Well done, Stream of Dreams team. ■



100-year-old fence keeps getting new paint



In front of the main entrance to Carnegie Mellon University, a private research university in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, there is a fence that celebrates its centennial this year. It's made of wood and constructed in 1923 by a year group of senior students who wanted to leave something that would be a perpetual reminder of their group.

Thousands of students have carved their names into the fence over the years since then, but the fence also formed a kind of bulletin board. Any student is allowed to give the fence a fresh coat of paint provided they keep to the following basic rules: The painting has to be done between midnight and sunrise using

techniques from the 1930s. That means no rollers or spray cans – brushes only. Furthermore, the fence has to be painted in its entirety, and lastly, two people from the year group must be designated to stand around the fence to explain the message on the fence. Up until 1993, the Carnegie Mellon Fence was the world's most painted object, but then things went wrong: the fence collapsed under the weight of the many layers of paint. A new fence was then installed in the same place. This time, steel beams were used, between extra-big wooden posts. The new fence has also been repainted time and again and now has a 4-inch (roughly 10 centimetres) coat of paint. ■

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