



Military and protective clothing is a growth area. Loaded with technical demands and tight specifications. Good territory for the skilled and competent but a minefield for the poorly prepared. 4D went over the parapet last year.

Taking protective clothing technology into the fourth dimension

"Stick to your last" was always the advice given to cobblers thinking of diversification, stay close to your basic skills. For many businesses this is easier said than done at a time when business is getting so complex it is hard to know what your core competences really are.

There was no such problem last summer for 4D when they launched the new company at the Interprotec 2004 health and safety exhibition in the Czech Republic.

4D is the new range of performance fabrics from Rossendale Combining Ltd, and its choice of location and market was carefully chosen to perfectly match their expertise.

The launch of the 4D brand indicates a change of direction for the company which has recently opened a Central/Eastern European office in Slovakia, encouraging continuity across the European Market.



Andrew Fisher, manager of the new 4D brand.



The 4D logo, appearing on a new range of market specific waterproof, breathable, laminated fabrics, is initially targeted at the contract market. Interprotec, based in the Czech Republic, provided excellent opportunities for initial discussions with a number of manufacturers and suppliers in the emergency services, police and military groups.



Waterproof, breathable 4D three-layer combat garment.

 4D

European Union PPE directives for Health and Safety in the workplace

According to Andrew Fisher, manager of the new brand, worker protection is paramount and finished garments must conform to a series of EN or ISO standards. 4D can provide a framework for guidance, allowing customers to make the correct laminate choice for protective clothing in each particular industry, backed up by the ISO 9000.2000 accreditation for quality.

4D specialises in providing fabric solutions for organisations such as the police, fire and emergency services, the military, electricity, gas, water, telecommunications, rail, the transport sector and the postal services. Mr Fisher noticed the expanding demand in this sector and the entry of the new countries into the EU was the spur that made them decide on the new move.

There are two main thrusts to the 4D approach. Basic is the 3-layer fabric which they offer, and built around it is a network of expertise in design, other components and solutions. As a result, they can offer the client a total package with a guarantee that it will meet the objectives and pass all the legislative and quality specifications.

This might cover specialist seam sealing and taping, or go right through to the design.

"In this day and age you have to be quite specialist," says Fisher. "To compete

it is all about service and specification. If you can give people what they want, rather than what is on offer, you can win the business."

For 4D the fourth dimension is, of course, time. Fisher believes that it is important to be close to the consumer and not be tied into high volumes. The activity in Asia at the moment is about high volume orders, delivered after a period of months.

With this in mind 4D expect to be announcing a new manufacturing centre in Eastern Europe in early 2005 to add to their existing plant in Northern England.

High technology specifications are very much part of this along with really

understanding customers' needs. For a military unit working in the dark it is really important to be quiet when walking. Infra red absorption is also important. On the other hand those working in industry have quite different requirements, and need to be highly visible.

Those working with electricity or petroleum need anti-static material and areas which are able to restrict heat.

The positive reception at Interprotect and subsequent activity in 2004 appears to be supporting this brand strategy. The 4D direction appears very positive as the company continues to develop completely new business with the military and uniform industries in Eastern Europe. 

