

PROTECTION EXPO

Tilsatec's Rhino cut resistant anti-microbial glove attracted a lot of interest at the show.

Europe is the place for big and impressive workwear shows, and Expoprotection in Paris last November was both. *Company Clothing* brings you a few of the highlights.

With almost 25,000 visitors and more than 800 exhibitors, covering everything from risk management and security to workwear and PPE, the second Expoprotection show had a vibrant atmosphere, and according to organisers the show's international visitors were up by eight percent – but not, or so it seemed, from the UK.

Many familiar names had a presence at the event, but the focus was very much on European business and several exhibitors commented that they had seen very few UK visitors this year. Perhaps it was fear of the train strikes of 2006 that returned again to blight the event, that put UK visitors off, but in case you missed out, here is just a small taster of what Expoprotection had to offer.

For Klopman and Invista's Cordura brand, Expoprotection was the place to officially launch the two companies' jointly-developed Vantage fabric.

Cordura fabric is widely used as reinforcement, mainly for patches, on tough workwear. Vantage is a blend of Invista T420 Nylon 6.6 fibre with combed cotton that creates a softer, more comfortable version of Cordura fabric that can be used for entire garments rather than just reinforcements, but is still durable.

At 250gsm, the 50/50 nylon 6.6 and cotton Vantage is the ideal weight for trousers, coveralls and jackets, and in addition to having the comfort of a cotton-rich fabric it offers an abrasion resistance of up to six times that of a standard 65 percent polyester/35 percent cotton fabric, performing to 250,000 Martindale rub cycles with

12KPa weight. If the response at the show is anything to go by, it is likely to be very popular.

'There has been a lot of interest,' said Judith Emslie from Klopman, whose stand displayed garments made from Vantage. 'People can't believe how soft and light the fabric is for the level of performance and durability it provides. We have very high hopes for it, and it was a good decision to launch it at this show.'

Susannah Rayfield, European market manager for Invista's Cordura brand, was equally pleased by how well the fabric was received, and the show also generated interest in another new product that the company has developed. In a first for the Cordura brand, which normally sells fibres, its latest product is a garment, a technical baselayer T-shirt. >>>



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►► The T-shirt is made from 60/40 cotton and Invista T420 nylon, and was launched in June 2008 for the US military for private sale to soldiers. 'It was developed because the soldiers require no melt/no drip undergarments for use in explosive situations,' explained Susannah. 'Whereas polyester T-shirts can melt and stick to skin under intense heat, nylon has different burning properties and instead of melting it turns into a gel and chars the cotton. The result is a crispy fabric that does not burn. It is not flame retardant, but can act as an additional layer of protection.'

The Cordura brand team plans to make the T-shirt available as a workwear product throughout Europe through distribution channels in each country. 'We are entering new territory with this product. It has an interesting technical story but the most interesting feature for workwear is the fact that it will dry much faster than a cotton T-shirt and won't absorb odours the way a polyester garment can. The fabric also performs very well in abrasion testing so it would be a perfect workwear product.'

Wakefield-based Tilsatec had a fantastic show, and it was well worth braving the chaotic Parisien transport system to attend, said Mark

"Kangaroo leather makes lightweight, flexible and very durable footwear"

Leadbeater. When *Company Clothing* stopped by for a chat, more than 40 companies had already expressed an interest in becoming distributors, and two products in particular had attracted the most interest.

The first was the newly launched Xcalibur cut resistant sweatshirt for use in the glass industry. Certified to EN 388 level 5, Xcalibur is made from a soft, lightweight fabric that is cool to the touch and can be used in a range of high cut hazard industries including glass handling and the automotive sector, according to Mark, where it is being used by people lifting sheet metal. Expoprotection marked the official launch of the garment and it met with an enthusiastic reception.

The other product that got the most attention was Tilsatec's cut resistant anti-microbial glove for the food industry. 'There is a huge market for this product for applications such as de-boning meat. We launched this

glove in September 2008 and it has been on trial in several companies since. The advantage of this glove is that it can be washed at 95°C and hot tumble dried. A lot of other gloves in this market have a low melting point for the fabric but our product has minimal shrinkage and shows no impairment to either comfort or dexterity after being washed. It also uses a permanent anti-microbial fibre.'

Footwear was, as always at these events, a major presence. Not only were there a multitude of stands offering safety and occupational footwear in a bewildering array of styles and colours, but the stands themselves were the biggest and most impressive. Many names were familiar; but some were not, and *Company Clothing* just had to investigate U Power's huge and stylish display.

U Power is a relatively new Italian brand of safety footwear that was launched at Expoprotection two years ago, and the company has around 100 distributors in the UK so far. The idea behind the brand, explained Robert Coleman, was to develop better, lighter and cooler footwear than the market had to offer. The emphasis is on innovation and performance, and the brand already supplies footwear into a range of industries from airports

to warehouses and the food industry.

A premier product, said Robert, is the SK Grip. 'This is one of our Supergrip products that has excellent slip resistant properties. Footwear with very fine tread patterns revolutionised the slip resistant footwear industry a few years ago, but very fine cleats can get clogged up and become ineffective. What U Power has done with Supergrip is to create a more open tread pattern made from a superb polyurethane sole that will not clog up so easily. Polyurethane also has better wear qualities than rubber and this product looks set to be our biggest seller in the UK.'

The SK Grip is also an Airtoe product. As Robert explains, in order to make lighter footwear and keep the foot cooler, U Power has made holes in the toecap to make it breathable, and then added a membrane to make it waterproof. The result is greater air circulation and a cooler, dry foot. Also making the footwear lighter is a composite midsole that weighs 125g less than a steel version.

Some of U Power's shoes are also made from Kangaroo leather. Why? 'Because it has great abrasion resistance, and is very hardwearing, so it makes lightweight, flexible and very durable footwear.' ■



Left: Klopman and Cordura officially launched Vantage at the show. Above: there was plenty to see and do at the exhibition.