

Applications and products news

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## Bright future for The Specialty Group's glow-in-the-dark fabric

Australia based company The Specialty Group has developed a luminous textile coating, which the company claims will glow in the dark for more than three hours after only 12 minutes of exposure to natural light.

Called Energlo, the product uses photoluminescent (light absorbing and emitting) crystals that are dispersed within several layers of the company's waterproof breathable coatings. These coatings can be applied to a range of face fabrics used for wetweather clothing where additional night-time visibility is required.

The company says the product, which was inspired by naturally occurring so-called "bioluminescence" exhibited by deep sea creatures, will be especially useful for emergency services attending traffic accidents at night, but adds there is also interest from manufacturers of skiwear and snowboard wear.

Vice President of International Sales & Marketing Daniel Leipnik, who is based at the company's Vancouver, Canada, office, said "Where the safety of law enforcement officers and ambulance and paramedic crews are involved, adding greater visibility to clothing at night is only going to make them safer and more easily seen than by conventional high-visibility fabrics or reflective tapes alone.

"And we are getting dozens of calls a day from leading brands of ski and snowboard wear and even manufacturers of cycling, running and children's wear who see Energlo as a wonderfully useful fabric" he added.

A key feature of Energlo is that sportswear brands that have already chosen their intended outerwear fabric can have this made waterproof, breathable and photoluminescent through the patented coating process.

One company already embracing the invention is Canadian snowboard outerwear brand Westbeach Sports. "Westbeach is constantly searching out new technologies and testing fabrics to be used for our products" said Michelle Gault, Director of Apparel at Westbeach Sports, which has exclusive worldwide rights to the Energlo technology for the winter 2006/07 snowsports season.

"With Energlo, we saw an opportunity to push the boundaries of style while maintaining the function and the waterproof and breathable properties of the garment" she commented. "Westbeach has worked closely with The Specialty Group in the development of our first Energlo piece, the Phenom jacket", which will be delivered to retailers later this year.

According to Leipnik, there are now more than 20 snow-sports brands that have confirmed they will be using Energlo in their collections for winter 2007/08 as well as "dozens" of workwear companies.

However, it is unlikely that sales of Energlo will be restricted to the snow sports and workwear sectors. "I have had calls from a New Zealand company that makes dog coats, a baby stroller manufacturer in Norway, and even a company in Japan that makes handbags with monkey cartoon prints on them" Leipnik revealed.

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