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Avoid Poor Contacts And The Problems They Cause

Poor contacts are the cause of more problems than all other low-voltage lighting installation errors combined. Poor contacts or loose connections cause friction which in turn produces heat. This heat will compromise both the safety and aesthetic qualities of any low-voltage lighting system.

This problem manifests itself originally in the terminal blocks within a transformer. The first concern before beginning the installation is that the terminal blocks must be of sufficient size and design to accommodate the ampere rating of the particular transformer plus 50% (UL 1838). This is a matter regarding the manufacture of any outdoor lighting transformer.

When it comes to installation, once the wires are inserted into the terminal block, it is of utmost importance to tighten the contact screw to the maximum extent. Once the contact screw has been appropriately tightened, vigorously wiggle the connecting wires up and down, back and forth etc... This settles the wires within the terminal block and will allow you to further tighten the contact screw at least an addition half turn. Do this every time, without exception.

Any loose connections in the cable runs can also create heat. Therefore, any splices in the cable runs must be made with an approved (UL or CSA) method. A twist on connector is not approved for direct burial. The piercing contact connectors are a continual source of corrosion. Either of the two result in poor contacts which generate heat and reduced voltage being delivered to the lamp.

From a troubleshooting standpoint, never make any cable splices more than six inches from the fixture. Running a "Home Run" to a hub is really asking for poor contacts especially with twist on or piercing connectors and underground splices. It is in your best interest to eliminate any underground splices whenever possible.

These practices will assist you with designing and installing low-voltage systems in a way that minimizes the production of heat. Moreover, they will further insure that your clients have a beautiful, functioning and safe outdoor lighting system.

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