

□ A day to remember



High-speed network SPIE Sud-Ouest connects Ariège

For the Pays d'Oc Operations department of SPIE Sud-Ouest, the month of May meant the start of work to install the high-speed network for the département of Ariège: a massive undertaking calling for highly specialised skills and resources.



Fitting high-density polyethylene ducts on trench hoes.

Closely studying a drawing, site supervisor Patrick Cazenave and project manager Patrick Eychenne check that there can be no hitch that will slow down the progress of the machine behind them as it methodically digs a trench 13 centimetres wide and 45 centimetres deep. Most of the site installation work for the Ariège high-speed network is carried out using mechanised means: a trench hoe digs up the soil, while sucking up the debris and feeding out a high-density

polyethylene duct. Following about 10 metres behind the machine, a three-man crew does the finishing work. Cable pits –2 kilometres apart in open countryside and every 100 metres in urban areas – are ready for the fibre-optic cable. A bit later on, another team will do the job of spooling out the cable inside the duct using compressed air, before making the connections and performing tests. In all, more than 250 km of trenches will be dug, 1,000 km of tube will be laid and



Patrick Cazenave (left) and Patrick Eychenne check the work progress remains on schedule.



Preparing junctions for the high-density polyethylene tubes.



Digging trenches by the "clean fast" technique.

280 km of fibre-optic cable will be paid out to serve the whole département. For the "Réseaux Ariège" team that is carrying out 35% of the site installation work, the job should be finished by the end of 2008. This contract represents a sales figure of €3 million for SPIE Sud-Ouest.

So far, 100 km of trench have already been dug. The nature of the soil (such as rocks and coated materials) can sometimes cause a hold-up, but the crews are managing a productivity of between 300 and 600 metres a day.

Ariège General Council seems happy with the efforts made by SPIE Sud-Ouest, leading a consortium of three companies established in the département, and is planning on asking it to dig another 100 km of trench. ■

Personal account

Patrick Cazenave,
site supervisor

"The main difficulty with this project is that we have to "juggle" with the three sites we are responsible for, and find suitable manpower and equipment resources so that we can meet our deadlines. Sometimes, I've got three 10-person teams all working at the same time! In urban areas, the local authorities make us work at night or during holidays near schools. In town, we use a special trench hoe which has the specific feature of sucking up debris as it digs, and this reduces the amount of dust raised (the "clean fast" technique). What is more, it digs a 13-centimetre wide trench, so vehicles can drive over the trench with no problem."

