



Tekirdağ Namık Kemal University  
Çorlu Engineering Faculty  
Textile Engineering Department



# ICONTEX 2019

## 2<sup>nd</sup> INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS OF INNOVATIVE TEXTILES



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## UTILIZATION OF METALLIC FIBERS IN TEXTILES

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#### Abstract

Some metal-based fibers should be used in order to provide the technical textiles with desired properties. Therefore, the use of such materials in textile products have been increased with the developing technology. Silver and copper are among the most preferred materials especially in areas such as smart textiles, medical textiles and protective textiles. The advantages of these materials such as conductivity for smart textiles and antibacterial effect for medical textiles are crucial for these types of textiles. In this study, classification of metal and metal-based textile raw materials used in textile products according to their usage areas and a general evaluation of the studies about these areas will be done.

#### Key Terms

*technical textiles, medical textiles, protective clothing, metal fiber*

#### 1. Introduction

Electronic device usage is rapidly increasing with the developing technology. In parallel, conductive fibers and yarns have been attracted by the researchers<sup>1</sup>. In contrast, metallic yarns, also known as metallic threads, have a long history goes back more than 3000 years used as decoration<sup>2</sup>. The definition of the metallic fiber means a fiber that is made from metal, manufactured fiber composed of metal, plastic-coated metal, metal-coated plastic, or a core completely covered by metal<sup>3</sup>. Conventional textile fibers can be coated with various methods to produce metallic fibers:

- Sputter coating
- Coating metal powder with binders
- Electro less coating
- Vacuum deposition

Today, metallic yarns or conductive yarns are used to create functional textiles, in other word ‘smart textiles’<sup>1</sup>. Smart textiles is one of those applications which require conductivity integrated in textile structures<sup>4-8</sup>. Metallic yarns<sup>9-13</sup> or electrically conductive polymers coated yarns<sup>14-20</sup> are utilized in such smart textiles applications.

Conductive yarns and fibers are used in various applications such as energy harvesting<sup>21-33</sup>, energy storage<sup>34-40</sup>, anti-static<sup>41-43</sup>, antimicrobial<sup>44, 45</sup>, artificial muscles<sup>46-48</sup>, sensing<sup>49-58</sup>, electromagnetic interference (EMI) shielding<sup>43, 59-84</sup> besides conducting electricity<sup>36, 39, 49, 51-53, 59, 61, 85, 86</sup>, filters, electrostatic discharge, plastic welds, data transfer in clothing, military applications<sup>1</sup>.

This study gives a brief information about metallic fiber production and utilization in textile applications.

#### 2. Types of Metallic Yarns for the Use in Textiles

##### 2.1 Metal Filaments

Metal filaments are described as their actual diameter opposed to conventional textile fibers according to linear density thereof. Nowadays, various companies produce different size of metal fibers such as Bekaert Fibre Technologies (BFT)<sup>1, 87</sup>. A broad range of metal fibers with the diameter of 1 to 80 µm are available in the market.

Usually, 8 to 14 microns fibers are utilized in most of textile applications. For instance, 1.4 denier polyester fiber has the same diameter with a 12 micron metal fiber<sup>1</sup>.

## 2.2 Braiding Metallic Yarns with Conventional Textile Fibers

This type of metallic fibers can be considered as core spun yarns, wrapped yarns, fibre blending or braiding composed of conventional textile fiber and metal fiber in a single diameter.

Core spun metallic yarns are manufactured in staple fiber spinning systems where the metal yarn in the core and staple fibers are covering it.

Wrapped yarns are where the conventional fiber is in the core and wrapped by a metallic yarn. Blend metallic fibers can be produced by blending staple metallic and conventional fibers and spinning in a staple yarn spinning system such as polyester-cotton blends.

Braided yarns are carried out by braiding rope-like metallic and conventional fibers in a braiding machine.

## 2.3 Coating the Conventional Fibers

Conventional textile fibers are coated in a vacuum chamber by either deposition or sputtering the metals in order to get conductivity on the surface of the non-conductive textile fibers.

General textile fibers can be dipped in a conjugated polymer solution or conjugated polymer can be coated on conventional fibers in the production process after getting out the spinnerette.

# 3. Textile Applications with Metallic Fibers

## 3.1. Energy Applications

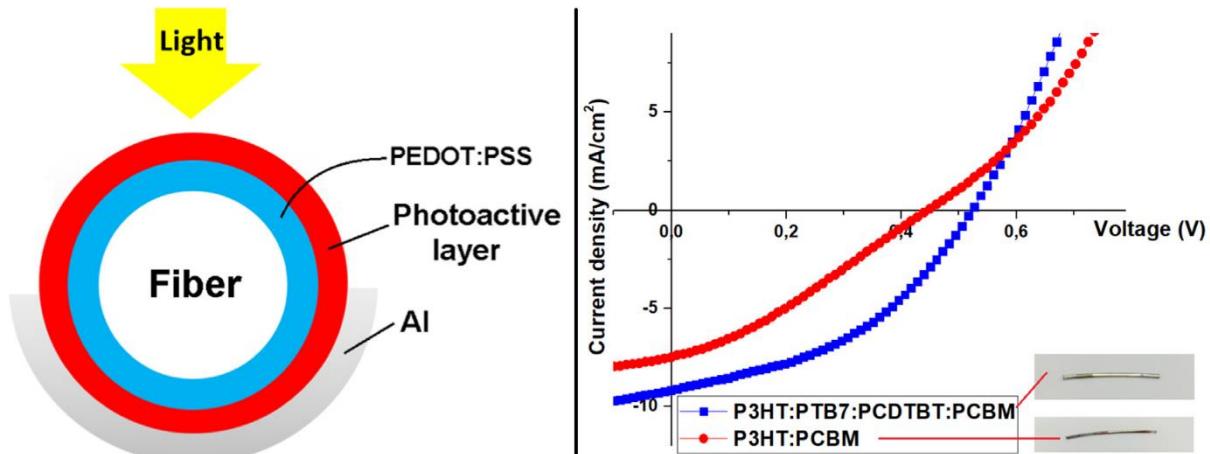
Energy is a part of daily life with rising technology and the population either in industry and social life. Thus, dependence on energy is an attractive area among the researchers. Photovoltaic is one of the most interesting technology to produce energy in an environmental way<sup>33, 88</sup>.

Solar cells is a structure that consists of photoactive layer sandwiched by two electrodes placed on a glass substrate. These electrodes are generally metal-based materials. By the portable devices are so popular recently, flexibility has been a part of research. Photovoltaic fibers enables the photovoltaic effect on flexible devices as in textile structures to meet the energy demand for military applications and outdoor activities.

Metallic fibers with the diameters in micron size are used as electrodes to collect electrons or holes produced in the light harvesting layer of the photovoltaic fibers<sup>22, 24, 28, 33, 89</sup>.

In early photovoltaic fiber studies, metals like stainless steel<sup>21, 90-92</sup> and titanium<sup>93, 94</sup> metals are used as primary electrodes and substrates for photovoltaic fibers.

Recently, conductive polymers like poly(3,4-ethylenedioxythiophene) polystyrene sulfonate (PEDOT:PSS) and Polyaniline (PANI)<sup>22, 28, 33, 88, 95-97</sup> and carbon-based materials<sup>98-101</sup> dip-coated and wrapping, respectively, around the conventional fibers are utilized in photovoltaic textiles. An example of a photovoltaic fiber with conductive polymer coated coonventional fiber as a substrate and bottom electrode is given in Figure 1<sup>22</sup>.



**Figure 1.** A schematic cross-sectional view of a photovoltaic fiber (left image), and current-voltage graph thereof (right image) reported by Borazan et al.<sup>22</sup>.

### 3.2. EMI Shielding Applications

Rapidly growing of electronic devices such as mobile phones, computers, modems, routers, digital circuitis, transfer lines etc. has some drawbacks besides many advantages. Mentioned electronics emit EM waves concluding EMI issues. An EM wave entering an organism can cause a heat by the vibration of the molecules that can cause negative effects for the lives. EM shielding can be possible by the interception of EM waves transmission by a suitable material into required area<sup>21, 98, 12, 102</sup>.

### 3.3. Other Smart Textiles Applications

Smart textiles are textiles that are able to sense stimuli from the environment, to react to them and adapt to them by integration of functionality in the textile structure. The stimulus and response can have an electrical, thermal, chemical, magnetic, or other origin<sup>103, 104</sup>.

Combination of conventional textiles and electronic fabrication technologies gives possibility to achieve new functionalities<sup>105</sup>. Smart garments collect the data from the body by the interaction of movement or sensors and transfer the collected data to a computer. Conductivity is a must where an electronic circuit is available. Thus, the conductivity in smart textiles is enabled by the metallic fibers. A key motivation for this research is textile production processes has a capability of automatically creating large-area surfaces a very high speeds.

A sensor based smart textile application has a possibility to measure applied pressure which integrated on a textile with metallic fibers. Such sensors can be used in various wearable electronics such as motion and gesture sensors, rehabilitation and medical textiles<sup>106</sup>.

In wearable electronics, the use of batteries may be difficult due to heavy-weight, rigidity, and safety reasons. Recharging the battery is another issue considering battery integrated systems. Researchers aimed to study for self-power generating systems that are called nanogenerators<sup>107-109</sup>. A report by Zeng et al. shows that harvesting electrical energy from mechanical energy is possible with the nanogenerators. A polyvinylidene fluoride (PVDF) fiber as a piezoelectric component can fabricate an open-circuit voltage of 3.2 V and current of 4.2 mA power at 0.2 MPa pressure<sup>108, 109</sup>.

## 4. Conclusions

Textiles are expected not only for covering our bodies or for fashion issued but also for advanced functionalities with the developing technology rapidly day by day. Textile producers consider this requirement to produce more value added products. With the advanced

technology and nano materials, researches take a challenge to develop innovative solutions for global requirements.

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