Wire is an important but often ignored component of a paging system. Because all wire has resistance, some of the voltage at the source is lost or dropped in the wire before it reaches the target destination. The amount of voltage lost in the wires is affected by the resistance or gauge of the wire and the current flowing in the wire. This is classic Ohm’s law in action. If the drops in the cables are not anticipated, the final volume level at the passive speaker may not meet the requirement or, for a self-amplified speaker, there may not be enough DC voltage available to the speaker to allow the built-in amplifier to operate cleanly, or at all.

There are different charts for centralized and self-amplified speakers to determine the maximum cable lengths that should be allowed. In the case of central amplifier systems, try to keep the system power lost in the wires to 10% or less. However, less power at the speaker is the only negative effect larger losses have on the system. Clarity, intelligibility and frequency response are unaffected by larger losses in the wiring of centrally amplified systems.

Self-amplified systems are particularly sensitive to losses in the wire, especially the amount of supply voltage that is lost in the wires on the way to the self-amplified speaker. When the drop in the wiring becomes too large, the speakers may begin to distort or stop functioning altogether. For this reason it is important to adhere to the maximums shown in the tables below.

### Wire Loss In Central Amplifier Systems

Once you have an idea of how many speakers are to be wired together in a run, estimate how long the wire run will be from the first to the last speaker in each run. Include the lead-in wire length from the amplifier to the first speaker in each run in your overall run length. For each run, sum up the speaker power and cable lengths.

With that information, refer to the Wire Loss Chart to ensure that the wire gauge is sufficient to support the power and cable length for the run. It may be necessary to increase the wire gauge, split the speaker loads, or shorten the wire run lengths if they exceed the chart maximums.

### Voltage Drop In Self-Amplified Systems

The most important wiring consideration with self-amplified speakers is to ensure that there will be enough voltage available at each device to allow its internal amplifier to operate correctly. If too much voltage is dropped in the wires leading to a speaker, this may not be the case.

Once you have an idea of how many speakers are to be wired together in a run, estimate how long the wire run will be from the first to the last speaker in each run. Include the lead-in wire length from the power supply to the first speaker in each run. Also sum up the CU ratings of all the speakers on the run.

With that information, refer to the Voltage Drop Chart to ensure that there are not too many speakers loading the wire used in the run or that the wire gauge is sufficient to support the power and cable length desired. To stay within the chart length limits, it may be necessary to either create a shorter run containing less speakers or double up on conductors in the cable to effectively lower the gauge of the supply wire. The Reducing Gauge Chart can be used to determine what effective gauge is achieved by doubling or tripling up on pairs in the cable.