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New improved Gerber Format Specification free at ucamco.com

Ucamco is delighted to announce the latest version of its industry standard Gerber Format Specification. Using this version, PCB designers can provide fabricators with files that can be processed faster, more easily and more safely than ever before.

The well-known RS-274X Gerber format itself remains unchanged, but Ucamco has streamlined, rationalised and simplified key areas within the Specification, making it clearer and easier to read while reducing still further the risk of error and delay in subsequent file processing.

Users are encouraged to download and use this latest version, which is available free from the Ucamco website at www.ucamco.com.

Gent, Belgium -January 27, 2012 – Output by virtually every PCB CAD system and accepted by practically every PCB CAM in the world, the Gerber format is the de facto standard for PCB image data transfer, enabling PCB professionals to exchange image data safely and efficiently. The current RS-274X Gerber format is simple and easy to interpret, and yet it is immensely powerful, allowing PCB designers to describe even the most complex designs completely and with absolute precision in a compact, unequivocal one-file-one-layer format.

Ucamco's decision to revise the specification came from its deep knowledge of the PCB industry and its needs, as Jirka Martinek, the company's R&D engineer for input formats explains: "we have over 25 years' experience in PCB CAM development and innumerable Gerber files have been processed using our software". As custodians of the Gerber format, Ucamco knows that data transfer between designer and fabricator is a delicate, critically important step in the PCB manufacturing cycle, so the company worked closely with its users to ensure that the new format specification was designed to the industry's needs. "They helped us to help the PCB industry by improving areas where there have been misunderstandings, making the new specification clearer and easier to use, and we thank these dedicated individuals", says Martinek.

Karel Tavernier, Managing Director of Ucamco, comments: "We want to make sure that designers and fabricators get the very best out of the Gerber format. To this end we have eliminated historical dead wood to make the new specification document clearer and its implementation more straightforward".

Having said this however, he emphasises that the vast majority of Gerber files that are produced have always been valid - the real issue is how they are used. For example, files with painted or stroked SMD pads and copper planes take longer to process, require more manual work and increase the risk of errors. And, rather unfairly, they impact the Gerber format's reputation. "Any pad shape or area can be defined in Extended Gerber, so there is no need to use Painting In", states Tavernier. Thankfully this technique is not used in the vast majority of Gerber files, but, he emphasises, its use should be phased out entirely.

It is also essential that the industry uses the formats that are designed for current technologies, and here, says Tavernier, lies another major issue: The continued use of the superseded RS-274-D Standard Gerber format. "This is an incomplete format that was designed in the 1960s for a technology that has been obsolete since the 1980s. It requires manual work, is actually harmful to the industry, and it's time that everybody stopped using it", he says, concluding: "We strongly encourage industry professionals to use the latest version of the RS-274X Gerber format".

To download the latest version of the RS-274X Gerber format, visit www.ucamco.com

About Ucamco

Ucamco (formerly Barco ETS) is a market leader in PCB CAM software and laser photoplotting systems, with a global network of sales and support centers. Headquartered in Ghent, Belgium, Ucamco has over 25 years of ongoing experience in developing and supporting leading-edge photoplotters and front-end tooling solutions for the global PCB industry. Key to this success is the company's uncompromising pursuit of engineering excellence in all its products.

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