



Feature Topic | SWS's Centennial History

SWS Group's Connecting Power Toward the Future

Tokai Electric Wire, the precursor of Sumitomo Wiring Systems, was born as a manufacturer of electric wires that were indispensable for Japan's modernization at the beginning of the 20th century, as Japan was taking its first steps into international society following the opening of the country. This year marks the company's centennial.

Over the course of the company's 100 years, Japan evolved into an economic superpower and Sumitomo Wiring Systems grew to be an enterprise operating in 33 countries with 256,000 employees across the world.

Looking back, we realize how closely intertwined the company's journey has been with the progress of society as a whole. We therefore look forward to seeking further growth over the next 100 years as we continue to evolve with society.

1910

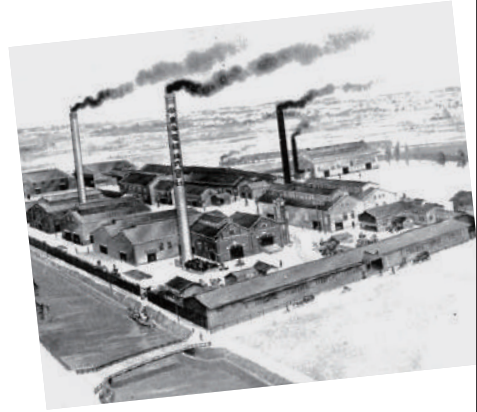
1914-1918
World War I



Started Wire Production in Yokkaichi in Responding to Modern Japan's Industrialization

The inaugural stage in Yokkaichi

The history of Sumitomo Wiring Systems reaches back 100 years to the beginning of Japan's modern industrialization. After the Meiji Restoration in 1868, government policy encouraged new industries across the country. The wave of modernization and industrialization also reached Yokkaichi, which had long thrived as a center of commerce. In February 1917, convinced that an electric wire business would flourish, Kozaemon Ito the 7th and Monshichi Kuki invited Kyusaku Fukasawa, an expert in electric wire production, to jointly launch Tokai Electric Wire Works in Yokkaichi, where the Yokkaichi Plant stands today. In December 1917, the works was incorporated as Tokai Electric Wire, Co., Ltd.



Panoramic view of Tokai Electric Wire

1920

1923
Great Kanto Earthquake



Joins Sumitomo Group to Survive Showa Depression

A turning point in a turbulent era

Tokai Electric Wire, born amid the booming economy of the First World War, steadily expanded its business and launched sales offices in more cities, including Tokyo, Osaka and Fukuoka. However, in 1929, the Great Depression engulfed the world economy, drawing Japan as well into a severe recession, which came to be known as the Showa Depression. Tokai Electric Wire was not spared and soon found itself in financial difficulties approaching bankruptcy. To surmount the crisis, the company formed capital and technological partnerships with Sumitomo Electric Wire & Cable Works (current Sumitomo Electric Industries, Ltd.) in 1931 and became a member of the Sumitomo Group. Joining the Group represented a turning point for Tokai Electric Wire, enabling the company to survive the recession and celebrate its 20th anniversary in 1937. But in that year the Sino-Japanese War broke out, followed by the Second World War, which forced the company to dedicate its production to meet Japan's military needs. In June 1945, an air raid hit Yokkaichi, leaving the town a sea of flames, and Tokai Electric Wire suffered severe damage.

When the war ended, Ihei Yoshida, then President of Tokai Electric Wire, declared that the company would focus on production to meet civilian demand and help reconstruct Japan as an advanced nation, and it moved quickly to ramp up production of electric wires. Thanks to the government's preferential allocation of copper and other major materials to electric wire makers for the reconstruction of the country's electricity infrastructure, Tokai Electric Wire could recover faster than other sectors and attained its pre-war production level just three years after the end of the war.



"Tokyo Wire" threads, used for insulating coating units, was a major product.

1930

1930
Showa Depression

1940

1939-1945
World War II



Sumitomo Electric Wire & Cable Works

1950



20th Anniversary party

1960

1964
Tokyo Olympics



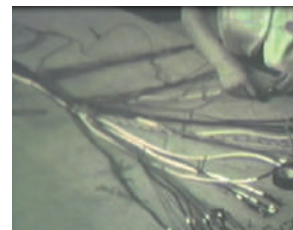
Growth of SWS's Wiring Harness Business Keeps Pace with the Automobile Industry

The solidifying stage for domestic production

Tokai Electric Wire restructured its management from 1956 through 1959 to drastically shift from previous dependency on electric wires, an Achilles heel that had made the company vulnerable to economic recessions. One measure was the launch of a wiring harness business.

In 1957, Tokai Electric Wire received its first order for wiring harnesses, 40 sets for buses ordered by Kawasaki Aircraft Co., Ltd. (currently Kawasaki Heavy Industries, Ltd.). Since then, orders of wiring harnesses for two-wheel, three-wheel and four-wheel vehicles have rushed in from Honda Motor, Co. Ltd., Suzuki Motor, Co., Ltd. (current Suzuki Motor Corporation) and Daihatsu Motor Co., Ltd. In the years following the Tokyo Olympic Games, motorization advanced rapidly in Japan, exponentially increasing domestic automobile production. Tokai Electric Wire also grew rapidly and, in 1965, the company launched the Sayama Plant in Saitama Prefecture in response to the increase in orders, as the first of other factories that would be built across the country. Besides the launch of production plants, the company founded production companies, including Toyo Harness, Co., Ltd. Tokai Electric Wire had then emerged as an enterprise equipped with a complete production system for meeting demand in Japan.

Tokai Electric Wire made its first overseas foray in 1978. The target was Brazil, where Honda Motor and Yamaha Motor had just started local production of two-wheel vehicles, and the company founded Sumiden-Tokai do Brasil Industrias Electricas Ltda. (STB) to manufacture wiring harnesses for this line of products. STB was a small company with only ten employees, and most of the plant operators were Brazilians who did not understand English or Japanese. The Japanese workers dispatched from Japan to Brazil, with its completely different culture and lifestyle, managed through a period of struggle to turn the company's first overseas foray into a major success, paving the way for many other employees who would venture abroad in the 1980s and later.



Production of wiring harnesses for buses



Assembly at Sayama Plant

1970

1980

1985
Plaza Accord

1986-1991
Bubble Economy

1990



World-class Business Matured in Yokkaichi Begins to Open Production Sites Overseas

International diffusion and expansion stage



President Shimizu delivering a greeting at the Nagoya Stock Exchange

In 1985, Tokai Electric Wire changed its trade name to Sumitomo Wiring Systems, Ltd. and was listed in the second section of the Nagoya Stock Exchange in 1986. Japan was then in the midst of a bubble economy triggered by the rapid appreciation of the yen following the Plaza Accord in 1985, and Japanese automobile manufacturers were starting mass production for domestic and overseas markets while accelerating local production outside the country. Sumitomo Wiring Systems also aggressively pushed forward with its global expansion, starting production in the mid-1980s in Asian countries, where labor was more abundant and cheaper than in Japan, and founded Sumitomo Electric Wiring Systems, Inc. (SEWS), a joint company with Sumitomo Electric Industries, in Kentucky, U.S.A. in 1986.

2000

2001
9/11 Terrorist
Attacks in the U.S.

2007
Global Financial
Crisis

2010

2011
Great East Japan
Earthquake

2017

The establishment of SEWS marked a bold move for Sumitomo Wiring Systems, and it became the centerpiece of its strategy for global development. Originally arising from the necessity of addressing U.S. requests to procure, produce and hire in the U.S. amid escalating Japan-U.S. trade tensions, the establishment of SEWS emerged as a pillar of the company's global strategy, the key for opening the doors of GM, Ford and Chrysler and to significantly boost the company's global market share.

Sumitomo Wiring Systems entered the European market in the 1990s and then the Chinese market in the 2000s. Its overseas production ratio of wiring harnesses exceeded the domestic ratio in 1996 as a result of becoming a supplier of Fiat and other European companies and the afore-mentioned Big 3 automobile companies in the U.S. The company was rapidly becoming a global player beyond the Japanese market.



Further Evolving as a Global Enterprise

The global growth period

Sumitomo Wiring Systems swapped its stock with Sumitomo Electric Industries in 2007 to become a wholly-owned subsidiary. The move solidified the company's business base toward the goal of becoming a larger, world-scale manufacturer.

The company has recently entered into the markets of emerging economies where motorization is accelerating. Also, it is honing its technological prowess in response to next-generation automobiles, which will be more intelligent and electronically based than today.

At Sumitomo Electric Wiring, we will continue pushing back our horizons to realize sustainable evolution as a global enterprise prepared for a major leap forward into the next 100 years.



Toward the Next 100 Years through "Connecting Technology"



SEWS at its founding



Skill Olympic Games with participants from around the world



Where sustainable technology connects with the future

VOICE

We are compiling a book on the 100-year history of Sumitomo Electric Wiring Systems as one of the projects celebrating the company's 100th anniversary. As we learn and understand more about our history, we are reminded that we would not have arrived at this point without the hard work of the many people before us.

We will therefore mention the debt we owe to the passion, vision and decisions of our forerunners for the company's continued growth while also building solid relationships with stakeholders and fulfilling our corporate responsibilities. The book will also describe the milestones of the company's history to deepen

connections with readers.

We hope that you will read the book, as we are confident you will find it to be informative and inspiring.

Last but not least, we want to express our sincere gratitude to all those who form the foundation of our company, who we hope will also benefit and build on the valuable experiences of this journey.

Editorial members of the 100th Anniversary Project Team

From left: Tomoya Akiyama, Motonori Kido, Kazuhiko Mori, Jun Aguni, and Takaya Namiki

