

Help and advice



Terry Wolfe on problems with engineered (multilayered) boards

Delamination: No need to split hairs

OVER the last couple of years, I have encountered a new problem that I had not met previously. It is the delamination of engineered (multilayered) boards.

The diagram below shows what I mean.



This problem seems to occur mainly in installations over underfloor heating (UFH). UFH is a contentious issue with all flooring materials.

My principle advice has always been to ensure you are certain the manufacturer of the floorcovering (vinyl, wood, ceramic) actually recommends his product for use over UFH.

This applies equally to the adhesive and smoothing screed: Is each manufacturer happy for their product to be used over UFH? And if so, at what maximum temperature?

I used to think that EVERY floor covering material was limited to a maximum subfloor temperature of 27degC. This, however, is not so, because several wood flooring manufacturers, Junckers and Kährs, for example, specify a maximum of 27degC on the hardwood floor's SURF ACE.

Most other wood floors I have met do specify the 27degC demarcation at the glue line.

The big problem is to ensure the

'Always be certain that the manufacturer of the floorcovering actually recommends their product for use over underfloor heating'

UFH installer understands this.

All too often, the flooring contractor arrives on site after the UFH installer has gone, and the home owner or site foreman has no idea what temperature to look for or how to control its maximum.

If you inspect a failed floor in winter, it is easy to take the surface temperature and if it is 35degC, you know what to say!

The problem arises if you are inspecting the floor on a warm day, when the heating is off. It is then more difficult to prove your point.

I wrote about this in **CFJ** a couple of years ago, referring to a gadget called a Silent Witness, saying that I had heard of it, but did not know where to get it.

Two readers responded to this, and a month or so later, I put their suggestions in **CFJ**. I repeat them here for your information:

The first suggestion was: Thermographic Measurements

T: 01244 818348

email: sales@t-m-c.com

I spoke to them, and they make irreversible thermometers that go under the floor or on its surface.

The suggestion from a second **CFJ** reader was as follows:

I have a large contract in January 150sq m of Listone herringbone to be laid over UFH. The heating engineer put a regulator on the system to ensure a suitable floor temperature. He also agreed to install 4no floor sensors.

I don't know if these are the 'Silent Witness' to which you refer, but they seem a good idea.

'The sensor sits inside a 10mm copper tube 600mm from the wall, buried just under the level of the concrete.

This then is covered with latex, and the floorcovering installed. The sensor is set at a maximum temperature of 27degC so in theory the surface temperature of the concrete should remain within tolerance. The product is made by Rehau TD.'

He concluded by adding: 'Wouldn't life be easier if architects ensured these were installed in all subfloors with UFH. (Maybe this is something for the CFA to bang the drum about).

I was once involved in a dispute in which the floor had failed due to moisture ingress. The expert for the other side was claiming this was not the case as few flooring



failures were caused by moisture!

Well, I know, and I am sure you do too, that the vast majority of flooring failures are moisture related. You need only pick up an issue of **CFJ** to see moisture repeatedly referred to!

Another problem, therefore, is the damp screed which ALSO has UFH! What a wonderful combination!

The dampness causes the wood flooring to expand; the heating drives the moisture to the surface to exacerbate the problem. It then dries out the flooring, leaving gaps and possibly causing the delamination referred to above.

To round off this article, I have included a photograph (above) of just such an installation.

The moral? At the risk of boring you – always ensure the screed is properly tested for moisture content prior to installation; and make sure you instruct the customer regarding maximum temperatures. **CFJ**

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Rob MacGregor on apprentices

Up to £11,750 is offered in financial help

Continued from page 18

involve a day-release or block-release programme over two or three years, which means that your apprentice will not always be on site.

This college programme can all be arranged by ConstructionSkills to make the process as hassle-free as possible, and you do have the opportunity to take someone on at a young age and train them up from scratch.

Programme-Led Apprenticeships (PLAs) are different in that they allow young people to complete a full time college based construction course. During this time, they gain certain key qualifications, before completing the practical aspects required to attain NVQ Level 2 through a continuous placement of up to 12 months with an employer. This new approach does

mean that employers take on apprentices with a more advanced knowledge of their designated profession.

Both types of apprenticeship have different advantages for different businesses and a ConstructionSkills Adviser should be able to help you work out which route is best for you.

However, it's not just about the apprentice being right for you – your business also needs to be right for them.

Before taking on an apprentice, you need to be realistic about your scope and range of work, your ability to support their training needs and whether taking on an apprentice will help your business.

Working with an apprenticeship agency such as ConstructionSkills, for example, means that your business would need to undergo a 'pre-

placement check' to confirm the working environment is safe, and that your business is suitable to take someone on.

Many businesses find this reassuring – as well as knowing there is ongoing support from the ConstructionSkills training officers, who can help troubleshoot any issues that might arise.

Taking on an apprentice may initially seem daunting, but with so much help and advice on hand, and financial support of up to £11,750 available, it can actually be the best way of expanding your business and ensuring a future for your trade. **CFJ**

■ www.cskills.org/apprenticeships

■ **T: 0844 844 0046**

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