



Alan Jackson & Andy Hone on calcium sulphate screeds

Drying times and answers to more questions

Q: Are anhydrite based calcium sulphate screeds fast drying?

A: They are not in their own right a fast drying screed. They dry naturally at the same rate as traditional sand cement screed. Any benefit in the drying time is derived from the fact that it can be laid to much thinner sections than its traditional alternative.

For example, in floating construction the screed can be laid at just 35mm depending on the application, compared to sand cement which should be laid at 65mm in the same type of construction thus the drying time for an anhydrite screed section will be shorter.

Additionally anhydrite screeds can be force dried to further reduce the drying time. It is important that the depth of the screed is designed at the minimum depth which satisfies the mechanical requirements of the project in order to exploit the benefits to their fullest extent. It is also important that the floor specification is correct.

Residual moisture in a substrate will extend drying times if no means is incorporated into the floor design to prevent it from entering the screed. This is of paramount importance with heated screeds where in many cases we would specify a secondary mechanical DPM to ensure that migration of moisture cannot occur from the substrate to the screed.

Q: Does an anhydrite screed absorb moisture from the air?

A: This is a question of simple physics which holds true for all screeds and concretes as they will all achieve moisture equilibrium with their surroundings. If the humidity in the atmosphere surrounding the screed is lower than that of the screed itself then moisture will evaporate from the screed surface. Anhydrite

screeds require no curing. Thanks to this characteristic, the drying process can commence much earlier than with other screeds.

By offering good ventilation after just 48 hours the humidity in the atmosphere above, the screed is reduced and the migration of moisture from the screed can be speeded up. It is reasonable to say that anhydrite screeds will not absorb atmospheric moisture any more than any other type of screed.

Q: Do anhydrite screeds need to be sanded or ground prior to the application of floorcoverings?

A: This depends entirely on the nature of the screed surface. Some older Gyflon screed mix designs allow the formation of a friable skin on the surface. This is often referred to as laitance. This skin is generally very loose and will be removed by the site traffic or by brushing with a stiff brush.

The skin should only be a very fine layer and should not extend into the surface matrix of the screed underneath. Loose friable skin must be removed as soon as feasibly possible to make its removal easier and to aid drying.

Unfortunately the nature of laitance or skin is often misunderstood and mistreated leading to some uncertainty and unpredictability in determining the need for sanding. The readymix manufacturers who produce the screed have addressed this issue by the introduction of 'low laitance' mix designs which inhibit the formation of skin.

This leads to a much more consistent and predictable surface finish ostensibly eliminating the need for skin removal. That is not to say however that the screed will not need sanding for other reasons e.g. the removal of

construction debris. Many flooring adhesive manufacturers advise sanding all screed types as part of their general preparation requirements to provide a suitable key for adhesion. This, by implication, means that all screeds should be sanded or scarified

Q: What primers and sealers should be used with anhydrite screeds?

A: There is no mystery about these and all generic primer groups including polyurethane, acrylic and epoxy systems have all been used successfully with anhydrite screeds in the right applications. As with damp proof membranes we cannot comment on the performance of specific primers in specific applications and always urge people to seek the relevant manufacturer's advice prior to commencing work.

It is reasonable to say that so called 'special' primers are not required with Gyflon screeds. The use of the primer will be dependent to a large extent on the pull off requirements of the final floorcovering or the nature of any smoothing compound.

We are of course happy to work with main contractors, floorcovering contractors and primer suppliers to ensure that the primer used is appropriate for the application but our input and expertise relates to the effects on and characteristics of the screed. **CFJ**

Alan Jackson is specification manager (Eastern) and Andy Hone is binder manager for Lafarge Gyflon.

■ **Don't miss our article next month when we discuss the question about whether you can apply a cement based smoothing compound on an anhydrite screed.**

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David Gatfield on rubber flooring

Why rubber is bouncing back into favour

ALL types of flooring have a place in the market, whether you prefer PVC, carpet, linoleum, timber, stone or the many other materials.

Generally commercial flooring falls into three main categories – high performance safety flooring; smooth but relatively plain sheet or tile flooring; and decorative flooring, often in tile or plank format.

With advances in technology and improved design capabilities, the traditional boundaries between these different materials have started to blur, with increasing cross over of form and function. Safety flooring, which dates back over 50 years and was once only seen in back of house environments, is increasingly being installed in front of house areas as

more design-led products come into the marketplace.

Decorative safety flooring was once a contradiction in terms, but several companies now have an increasingly expansive range of products designed for safety primarily but with a leaning towards high design.

Pre-dating plasticized PVC as a flooring medium is rubber, often viewed as one of the original decorative floorcoverings, alongside linoleum.

Like PVC, rubber flooring is also enjoying a renaissance, perhaps due to its long associations with design and practicality.

Rubber is one of the most durable flooring finishes available, with modern versions containing

plasticizers and fillers to make it harder wearing and more stable. It is more resistant to cigarette burns than PVC and is also deemed to be softer and quieter to walk on, thus cutting impact noise (footfall) and airborne noise (echo) considerably.

These practical qualities make rubber flooring suitable for use in gyms and other areas of high activity. In studded format, rubber is often seen in airport concourses, chosen for its hard wearing characteristics and for ease of maintenance –

which brings me to another one of my unofficial guides to cleaning rubber flooring.

1. New rubber flooring (not sports) should be cleaned with an alkaline detergent. Existing rubber

floors should first be stripped of degraded polish using a floor stripping solution, then thoroughly rinsed with clean cold water.

2. Neutralise with either a bespoke neutralising agent or a couple of tablespoons of vinegar in a bucket full of water by mopping over the floor.

3. Allow to dry then apply two coats of a high solids metallised emulsion polish.

4. Maintain by dry sweeping and spray buffing with a floor maintaining solution and a high speed rotary buffing machine fitted with a soft brush or pad. **CFJ**

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