

Editor's comment

# MANUFACTURERS ST AND ACCUSED

**C**ERTAIN flooring product manufacturers are reported to be setting payment dates that are out of kilter with contract agreements and then demanding cash upfront from hard-pressed flooring contractors.

Furthermore, some of these producers are also reportedly refusing to deliver materials before being paid in full.

As a result of this aggressive practice, apparently prevalent on bigger projects involving large amounts of materials, some beleaguered flooring contractors are facing a cashflow crisis. They cry that they are being held to ransom.

Many manufacturers are, of course, also suffering in the recession with several having to lay off staff. But the growing feeling among contractors is that some suppliers are taking advantage of the fact that manufacturers have traditionally never been part of construction contracts – even where significant volumes of their products are specified.

Payment terms are normally arranged during pre-contract negotiations in which product suppliers are excluded. It is usual for the big builders to expect payment at the end of the month, whereas certain producers have decided that they want paying on the 20th.

The deepening downturn has further increased competition in the construction industry, which even in the good times can be cut throat. Main contractors and big builders, not known for their generosity to sub-contractors, are also claimed to be cutting corners.

Some are apparently failing to give flooring contractors any means for off loading materials on site, even a single forklift, contrary to verbal agreements at pre-contract meetings.

And despite stringent new environmental regulations, some

main contractors are reportedly refusing to provide skips or other waste collection facilities. Every trade on a building site providing their own skips? Who will be responsible for policing what rubbish is placed in each one? A farce? Of course it is!

One big name builder reportedly told a certain regional flooring contractor that, in addition to ordering his own skips, he would also have to provide off loading facilities, and, even before having an inkling of actual site conditions, also cover the cost of any hoists, lifts and access platforms required.

Is this not the builder's responsibility as project manager, the floorlayer asks? And does it not create a health & safety issue if trades independently set up their own hoists?

This is where the Contract Flooring Association comes in! Members can rely on the CFA, through its top level industry contacts, to offer expert advice to help solve problems.

The CFA has always made an excellent case for contractors to join, but in these tough times membership is even more imperative. And when it involves disputes with suppliers, the CFA provides a unique and invaluable forum.

Flooring contractors can face manufacturers across the table in a non-adversarial atmosphere and discuss solutions for the benefit of all parties, and the industry as a whole.



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## For starters They're fired.....

The recession has clearly put pressure on everyone who is still in work. One employee in a flooring company went to his manager last month, requesting a pay rise in 2009. The justification for him earning more

money, he said, was because he was now having to do the work of three people.

The boss replied: 'This is a clear case of redundancy. Give me the names of those three people and they will be fired.'



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