

IT'S CRIMINAL TO BE A WASTER!

A LOT of hot air is talked about being environmentally friendly. Construction product manufacturers do it and even contractors. But what they have so far failed to curb is the volume of construction and demolition waste – over 100 million tonnes a year – a third of all rubbish produced in the UK, according to government's own figures.

Vinyl flooring manufacturers, who have begun a high profile drive to boost recycling, still have a waste mountain to climb. By their own reckoning 20,000 tonnes of new vinyl floors a year are dumped. In addition, upwards of 60,000 tonnes are disposed of at the end of its life, mostly ending up in landfill.

Textile floor coverings have an equally outrageous record. Over 4m sq m of contract carpets are chucked away annually in the UK, with 90% sent to landfill, according to one study. But, as reported in **CFJ** last month, carpet manufacturers are at last getting their recycling act together.

The respected research organisation CIRIA estimates that 60 million tonnes a year of brand new materials, including flooring products, ordered and delivered to site, go straight into the skip without ever being used. Anyone professing a concern for the environment should find that figure abhorrent.

This problem is largely down to over-ordering. Working in fast-track conditions, contractors routinely assume that a percentage of the product will be ruined after installation and need to be replaced before the job is finished. Floor coverings are particularly prone to damage by plasterers, plumbers and painters going in after the floorlayers or working around them.

Most manufacturers, who boast about how green they are, deny responsibility for the squandering of their materials after they have left the factory gates, but now they – and others in the construction industry – are being called to account.

The new SWMP regulations, effective from April this year, are designed to slash the above statistics for builders' waste and drastically reduce the obscene reliance on UK landfill sites which are forecast to run out of capacity within 10 years.

SWMP stands for Site Waste Management Plans which require clearly defined actions to reduce, re-use and recycle the waste on all contracts over £300,000.

Construction waste won't disappear over night, but SWMP will hopefully bring about a big change in attitudes to waste and the abandonment of previous careless practices.

The SWMP regulations apply not only to clients, specifiers and contractors, but also to manufacturers. Voluntary 'rules' often don't work. So the government is to be commended for making these new regulations tough and legally enforceable.

Remember that the wrongful handling of waste could land you with a criminal record! Go to: www.netregs-swmp.co.uk



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