



Alan Jackson & Andy Hone on calcium sulphate screeds

‘Worried about Gyvlon screeds? Don’t be!’

FROM time to time we receive questions from floorcovering contractors who have had difficulties when dealing with Gyvlon anhydrite based calcium sulphate screeds. Sadly we often get the queries after problems occur.

If advice is sought before the floorcovering is installed then the vast majority of the problems would be avoided. We must keep these issues in perspective and bearing in mind the sheer volume of Gyvlon screed being supplied, these negative experiences are relatively few compared with other screeds.

The main difference is that traditional screeds have been around for many years and follow on contractors have learned how to deal with the issues they encounter.

A classic example is residual moisture. When there is a doubt about the level of residual moisture in a traditional screed a surface damp proof membrane will be used. This has been difficult with anhydrite based calcium sulphate screeds as there is little understanding within the flooring industry about how these screeds react to moisture entrapment. Additionally we have not previously recommended the use of damp proof membranes on anhydrite screeds.

The problems fall into three main categories or a combination thereof.

1. The screed has been specified or installed poorly;
2. The screed has been subjected to a poor post installation treatment regime;
3. The expectations of the customer have been too high.

Using residual moisture as an example these relate as follows:

■ **Poor specification:** Anhydrite screeds dry at the same rate as traditional sand cement screed i.e. 1mm per day up to 40mm

and two days per mm thereafter. A standard specification depth for traditional sand cement screed would be 75mm.

We often encounter projects where a sand cement specification has been altered to include our screed in order to enjoy all of the benefits previously explained. The drying time for this is 40days for the first 40mm and 70 days for the remaining 35mm i.e. 110days assuming good drying conditions and that the screed is not saturated post installation.

By manipulating the specification to include deeper insulation and a 35mm anhydrite screed in place of 75mm sand cement screed then it is obvious that the drying time will be significantly shortened. The change from sand cement to anhydrite screeds without consideration for the depth can lead to drying times that are un-necessarily long.

■ **Poor post installation treatment:**

Traditional sand cement screed benefits from the presence of moisture during its curing phase. Indeed, sand cement screed should be cured by covering with a sheet of polythene for seven days following installation.

We have seen projects where the anhydrite screed has been laid and the work area completely sealed, in the same way as they would if cementitious screed were used, in the mistaken belief that the anhydrite screed requires curing. It does not. Anhydrite screeds benefit from good ventilation after 48 hours post installation. No screed will dry unless the relative humidity in the atmosphere above the screed is lower than that in the screed itself.

Our advice is that the area covered with an anhydrite screed should be sealed for 48 hours to allow it to harden after which air change should be encouraged by opening windows and doors to offer ventilation. Apart from forced

drying this is the most efficient way to dry an anhydrite screed.

■ **Unrealistic expectations:** We are of course aware of the pressures on construction times and anhydrite screeds can be used very effectively as a means to reduce the build programme. However consideration must be given to the drying times which can reasonably be expected.

There is little point in programming floorcovering installation to commence two weeks after the screed as it will clearly still be wet. Indeed when we consider any screed type, if the building envelope is not watertight at the time of installation and the screed becomes saturated, the drying time will be extended.

Give careful consideration programming installation of any screed as the consequences of poor programming can be significant.

There are back up plans available. Unlike sand cement screeds anhydrite screeds can be force dried from just one week post installation, using dehumidifiers. If available, an underfloor heating system can be utilised as early as seven days when commissioned in line with the manufacturers instructions.

In all circumstances the underfloor heating must be commissioned to ensure residual moisture is removed prior to the application floorcoverings. These steps will significantly reduce the drying time of the screed. **CFJ**

■ www.gyvlon-floors.co.uk

■ **Next month we look at whether you can put a surface DPM on a Gyvlon screed.**

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David Gatfield on welding vinyl

Top 10 basic rules to seal the deal

IT seems that there are still plenty of people out there having problems with welding.

Though a small part of the total job; welding is arguably the most important part of the fine detail of any sheet flooring installation.

Get it right and the job looks great, get it wrong and often the only option is to rip everything up and start again at great expense – yours.

Welding coated products or those with a wearlayer sometimes gives cause for concern, particularly for the first-time user.

But there is little or no difference in the welding process with these products provided you

follow a few basic rules.

So here is a guide to the welding of sheet PVC flooring.

1. Form a neat tight joint between adjacent sheets of floorcovering.
2. Always overlap and cut in the seams so they are touching down the entire length.
3. Make sure there is no adhesive in the joint.
4. Allow adhesive to cure overnight where possible.
5. Groove the material to the correct depth (approximately 66% or 2/3rds the thickness of the flooring). Where coated products have been covered it's important to groove the internal angle prior to hot welding.

6. Set the welding gun to the required temperature (about 350Deg) and allow it to warm up for at least five minutes. If in doubt, trial the gun on scrap material before attacking the main seams.

7. Weld at a steady consistent speed, too fast and the weld won't take, too slow and you may burn the flooring.

8. Allow the weld to cool before trimming.

9. Trim the weld flush with the floorcovering.

10. Don't work in the dark.

There is a setting normally between five and six on most welding guns which will melt the PVC flooring but not burn it,

however long the tip of the welding nozzle remains in contact with the product.

Find this setting on your own gun, and welding becomes much easier and you'll not scorch the floor.

Welding mitres is just as easy, but if you have problems turn the speedweld nozzle the opposite way up and reduce the heat a few degrees.

Remember that the quality of the installation is only as good as the quality of the welding. **CFJ**

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