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Weighing up the good and bad

preferably be as square as possible with a width to length ratio not greater than between 5-8m.

Any movement joint, or joints likely to be subject to movement, in the calcium sulphate screed should coincide with the movement joints in the tile bed.

Movement joints should be incorporated as outlined in British Standard BS 5385-3, 2014 Clauses 6.8 and 7.1.6. For heated screeds also refer to The TTA technical document Tiling to

Calcium Sulphate based screeds.

Last, but not least, before tiling onto calcium sulfate screeds we would always recommend getting professional technical advice from manufacturers to ensure your installations look great and last the test of time.

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FROM OUR ARCHIVES

What NOT to do when installing wood flooring

I WAS called out to inspect a failed solid wood plank 180mm wide where the floor had buckled and lifted, leaving the room unusable. The inspection was booked directly by the consumer who, on the phone, went through the issues.

I asked who'd installed the flooring and was told it was a builder - 'a very nice gentleman' who was now installing the clients' porcelain tile flooring, and who was 'very professional as he can put his hand to anything'.

The inspection was duly booked with the consumer believing yet again 'Bob the Builder' was perfect and that the problem was a defective product, which is the normal response I get.

I turned up onsite to be greeted by the consumer who duly pointed out the issue, saying we'd have to look through the window as the door couldn't be opened properly.

Obviously, this left me unable to inspect the flooring. Never mind, said the customer, surely you can tell just by looking at it that the product is at fault? Now this may surprise you, but that's beyond me.

It just so happened Bob was, at that moment, installing the new kitchen. I told the customer that it looked as though the floor would have to come up anyway, and in order to evaluate the situation, I really needed to get in. Furthermore, I pointed out that if they'd told me I'd be unable to get into the room, I wouldn't have booked the appointment.

I told them the door would have to come off and be replaced with a new one. Bob then appeared and, without further ado, kicked the door down, allowing us safe passage.

The floor was cupping and had lifted in four places, where it had even lifted the furniture. I cut through it to expose the underlying subfloor, making the floor safe; in doing so, I found a good example of what NOT to do when installing wood flooring.

The solid oak planks had been installed on double-sided tape which Bob said cost him a fortune at £15 per roll. The consumer echoed Bob's sentiments, backing him up. I duly continued my inspection, carried out a moisture test of the subfloor, which was new sand and cement screed which Bob said had been poured at 100mm depth and left to dry for at least a month.

I asked Bob if he had taken moisture readings.

The answer was no; when you do this job every day, he said, you know when the floor is dry.

I could only take an indicative reading of the floor during my inspection but the meter read its maximum of 6.9%M.C, which is wet. Very wet. Needless to say I could pull the oak off the tape easily as it wasn't sticking to the subfloor.

The consumer was still convinced the product was to blame; I simply responded that I'd record my findings in the report. I was then offered a tour of Bob's other works, including the 'magnificent' tiled floor.

When I entered the kitchen, I nearly broke my neck tripping over the lippage left in the tiles. I contemplated the mess of the tiles and the lounge/diner flooring and tried to figure out what it was about the Bobs of the world that consumers fall for (only clean answers, please).

On getting my report, the consumer told me I didn't know what I was talking about. Bob had told her, apparently, that he knew I was going to blame him for the problem as he could 'tell by the look in my eyes'.

I told her I was sorry she didn't agree with my findings and advised her to get another independent report. Two weeks later, the consumer called me to say she'd commissioned another report - this time by Bob's friend!

I advised the customer that she'd have to go to court as I wasn't changing my report and didn't regard the new finding as independent, owing to the author's relationship to Bob.

'But he is a highly skilled carpenter,' the customer objected. In that case, I'd hate to meet an unskilled one!

Eventually the consumer saw sense and, believe it or not, asked whether I carried out inspections of tile floors.

The floor was taken up and replaced by a professional company specialising in wood flooring. This company carried out the installation and subfloor preparation to perfection. Unfortunately, Bob didn't pay for anything in the end; the consumer footed the bill for the new floor and said she didn't want him back in the house.

Funny that.

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Sid Bourne is an independent consultant



Sid Bourne recalls a consumer who saw the light too late

'The consumer was still convinced the product was to blame; I simply responded that I'd record my findings in the report'