

The green, green access floors of home!

Apart from being the only local manufacturer of access flooring, fully South African owned and Proudly South African, SolidFeel has a strong affinity with the move towards "green" building as a member of the Green Building Council of South Africa (GBCSA) and its products comply with the LEED requirements.

In fact, SolidFeel's stand at the forthcoming Green Building Expo in Cape Town will exhibit a very "green office concept" that will incorporate the flooring, furniture, computers and carpeting.

The LEED (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) Green Building Rating System – developed and administered by the US Green Building Council, a non-profit coalition of building industry leaders – is designed to promote design and construction practices that increase profitability while reducing the negative environmental impacts of buildings and improving occupant health and wellbeing.

There are several rating systems in existence worldwide, all very similar to or based on LEED, including BREEAM from the UK and Green Star from Australia.

The GBCSA Board has decided to base the South African rating tool on the Australian Green Star system and to customise this tool for South African use as a voluntary system under which developers may apply to have their projects rated and certified by the GBCSA.

This was explained in the previous issue of *FLOORS in Africa*, which also mentioned that the Nedbank Phase II project – where SolidFeel access flooring has been specified because of its environmental advantages – is hoping to become one of the first Green Star Office v1 Design rated buildings.

Jason Bush of GBCSA says that access flooring can play a major role in adding to a building's overall rating – particularly in terms of air change effectiveness and air distribution.

"Within the confines of a complete and extensive evaluation process, the overall system, from the installation and placement of the air vents to the effective and individual control of air by personnel in the offices, can result in the building gaining automatic credits towards its Green Star rating," he says.

This advantage is also voiced by Francois Schutte of South African mechanical and electrical engineers Spoomaker & Partners, who says that using the floor void is a real boon for the provision of fresh air in offices because it is much easier to regulate and control exact distribution of fresh air if separated from the overhead airconditioning systems and supplied from below at neutral temperatures.

"Airconditioned air from below floor is also a firm requirement in computer rooms, in fact any data environment cannot operate effectively without it, and overhead airconditioning will not do the same job, so this is one area where access flooring is almost imperative," he says.

Access flooring also comes into its own in terms of flexibility for the electrical reticulation of a building; providing power, data, communications and other cabling to individual workstations is greatly simplified; installation is less costly; other methods such as wall-mounted sockets or power poles are eliminated; and it has been estimated that savings of around 35-40% in electricity bills can be achieved.

One area where access flooring really excels is in office layout and space management. Consultant Livia Wright of BEADS Space Planning



says that although access flooring greatly assists in the original space planning and layout of any new project, its main advantage is in the churn of the building.

"Large offices tend to change their requirements fairly regularly, and this is greatly facilitated with the use of an access floor," she says.

Presenting the view of the architect André Wright, director of Boogertman & Partners in Pretoria, says that he prefers to design with accessibility and maintenance to technology in mind, and having everything mounted in one space and easily accessible is infinitely better. "Apart from being easily accessible, the space required for services are considerably reduced, making installation much simpler," he says.

By moving the aircon into the access floor as a plenum means that costs are saved on ducting and ceilings that are eliminated. The space required in the floor is further reduced because the air moves around the services and is not restricted to ducting sizes that cross over other services. This results in a standard access floor height of approximately 350mm opposed to conventional ceiling space of approximately 700-800mm. This effectively reduces the building height by approximately 300-400mm per floor.

"These aspects, together with the superb thermal qualities of access flooring and its green potential, should make any designer think twice about not using it," says André. ■

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The **SolidFeel** range of access floors has been specifically designed to cater for the demands and flexibility required by today's highly technological business environment. SolidFeel Access Floor systems are the ideal choice for new and renovated office space. SolidFeel Access Floors are flexible enough to adapt quickly, and easily to changing office furniture and equipment layouts.

The SolidFeel Access Floor range of panels are designed to withstand heavy rolling and concentrated loads. The SolidFeel system, including our new 1.2 m span understructure, with finished floor heights of up to 1.8 meters, is the ideal choice for today's server and data room environments. SolidFeel systems have the versatility of allowing panels with different load characteristics to be placed exactly where they are required without changing the understructure.

SolidFeel embraces the Green Concept within the parameters of our product range. In our manufacturing process we strive to use the resources at our disposal responsibly and contributes to a better living standard for all. SolidFeel Access Flooring is manufactured to the highest specification and when used to its full potential it will make a contribution towards a Green Star rating.



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