

Standing on shaky ground?



water-proofing under the bath for example.

"That means we can only do the areas left which can be a waste of time - waste could leak from the bath pipes," he says.

If water-proofing isn't done, de Martin says it's important to record that and let the client know. He makes an effort to advise a client to water-proof before the services go in. "They can do it themselves," he says.

With so many failures in the area of water-proofing, even with vinyl and especially over particleboard, which swells when wet, de Martin says generally the builder is liable if requirements aren't met. "Places to be careful of are under the dishwasher, the laundry as well as the bathroom - but where do you stop? Really, the whole house should be water-proofed."

There are a number of liquid membranes available for water-proofing - most tiling manufacturers have a membrane. De Martin recommends using an adhesive that has a membrane as part of the product range as it decreases the likelihood of any problems. "Mixing product can be a problem," he says. "If it doesn't work, the adhesive manufacturer

Left: Top Pave Concrete Products' cement-based resurfacing compound made into a decorative finish. Has to be reasonably smooth for bathroom floors for ease of cleaning.

Below: Jacobsen Creative surfaces recommends Tarkett Eminent Multisafe - a homogeneous vinyl floor designed for barefoot areas. The special raised surface lets water drain away from under feet, reducing the risk of slipping.

Don't slip up when specifying flooring materials for wet areas. Commercially, the rules and regulations covering flooring materials are well documented, while domestically the issues are less clear. Fashion and safety are the major factors to be taken into account when specifying flooring but should safety be the foremost consideration?

Safety flooring conjures up images of institutions and factories - glum, grim and austere. But that is no longer so as manufacturers of flooring materials make safety an integral part of fashion and design.

People with impaired mobility have as much dislike for sterile and unattractive bathrooms and kitchens as anyone. In the latest census 19.7% of the population declared a disability, and that means an estimated 80% of New Zealanders have some form of relationship with a disabled person.

At the Auckland Disabled Resource Centre showroom, manager John Killick has established a fully functional bathroom complete with level access shower and safety flooring. "We're here to assist with choice and get the safety message across but in many cases practical overcomes pretty," he says.

Manufacturers, specifiers and installers of flooring products need to be aware of New Zealand's building code for bathroom floors which says "legally a bathroom floor must be able to contain accidental overflow; be impervious and easily cleaned; and prevent watersplash penetrating behind linings or concealed spaces".

By far the most popular flooring material is tile for which preparation is essential. Alec de Martin of CTANZ - the ceramic tile association - says often tilers are brought in after a bathroom is in place and there's no

