

ADHESIVES



All the benefits and none of the headaches

A new water-based epoxy grout is set to revolutionise the UK tiling sector, claims Peter Vann of Ceramique Internationale.



Complicated mix-ratios, intense, unhealthy and headache-causing smells, short work time and difficult, lengthy clean-offs. These are just some of the reasons that epoxy grouts currently account for just 5% of grout sales by value.

However, despite the negatives, the benefits of epoxy grout – durability and it being waterproof and stainproof – mean that it is still growing in popularity, with sales increasing 25% year-on-year.

Now, one product is set to revolutionise the market; providing all of the benefits of standard epoxy products but without any of the headaches.

Smart & Simple is a water-based product launched by Smartfield Solutions Ltd; an Essex-based company committed to research, development and manufacturing of environmentally friendly epoxy products.

Officially launched at The Surface Design Show in London earlier this year, and available exclusively via tile-specialist Ceramique Internationale, Smart & Simple is an environmentally-friendly, first-of-its-kind product, which replaces harmful components traditionally found within epoxy grouts, eliminating the VOCs, toxic smells and carcinogens. This means the product is safer for both the installer and the planet, while still producing the same heightened performance properties as traditional epoxy grouts.

In development for more than five years, Smart & Simple is fully tested to European standards in UK accredited laboratories. Its formulation has very low VOC content, is non-carcinogenic. The product has a 1:1 ratio of colour and hardener which makes it fool-proof to mix in its container-turned-mixing bucket. In terms of performance the product boasts all the characteristics of epoxy: more strength, less shrinkage, less abrasion and no cracking. It is also, stain-, moisture-, bacteria- and fungus-resistant; and so retains its appearance for much longer and is very easy to clean and maintain.

Above: Smart & Simple is a lot easier to apply than alternatives due to its water-based properties. Any excess can be simply wiped off with cold water and a sponge, making the grouting process faster.

Right: The finished Smart & Simple grout joint.



Smart & Simple is also a lot easier to apply than others due to its water-based properties, and the excess can be simply wiped off with cold water and a sponge, making the grouting process faster and also allowing for the repeat usage of tools and equipment and, therefore, making it more cost effective for the tiler and client. This improved clean-off process removes the need for repeat site visits for additional cleaning-off of the residues commonly associated with the use of traditional epoxy grouts, thus also negating the need and cost of the aggressive, potentially harmful, cleaning agents that are required.

Additionally, Smart & Simple can be mixed with five pre-set colours to help match the aesthetic tones of the tile and the home; a move which has been commended by many designers and architects. Any colour in the RAL spectrum can be produced on request, increasing personalisation.

Peter Vann, Director of Ceramique Internationale, says: "Despite the multitude of advantages, epoxy grouts still only account for a tiny percentage of all grout sales, and this is because of the difficulty installers have using them. Even though epoxy grouts provide a significantly better performance than cement-based grouts, it is well known that installers dislike them due to the application limitations, smells and other health threats, and we've actually seen cases of tradespeople actively dissuading the consumer from using them, causing suppression of consumer demand."

"When we met Ori Lamm of Smartfield Systems we recognised what he was trying to achieve with this new product and the potential it had to change the fortunes of epoxy grouts. It is healthier for humans and beneficial to the planet; but it is also hugely beneficial in terms of saving time and resources for the installer."

"We believe the tiling fraternity will embrace Smart & Simple once they understand it is quicker, easier, safer and more pleasant to use than any other epoxy grouts, while still offering the same leading performance benefits, and all at a similar price to current epoxies."

Smart & Simple is available in 5kg tubs, which will fill approximately 11.5 sq metres of 200 by 200 by 9mm tiles with 3mm grout gaps. Smart & Simple's unique properties allow the grout to be slightly thinned with the addition of up to 5% water for additional speed of application.

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