

FLOORING

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q&A

Can I clean my laminate floor with vinegar?

All that is needed to keep a laminate floor clean is regular sweeping or vacuuming (or both), and an occasional rub over with a clean, damp mop – but never use a wet mop or lots of water when cleaning.

Don't ever use soap, detergent, or cleaners with wax either, because they will leave a film that makes the floor dull, and laminate floors must never be waxed, polished, sanded or refinished.

If you wish, you can mix one cup of vinegar or ½ cup of ammonia in five litres of water. Not normally necessary, but it's your call!

What should I avoid using when cleaning a marble floor?

Detergents containing lemon, vinegar or acids should not be used on marble or other calcareous floors; scouring powders and creams should also be avoided as they contain abrasives that may scratch the stone.

Apart from regular sweeping, the best way to clean any natural stone floor is by using a clean mop, a mild liquid detergent and clean, warm water – but the floor surface should be rinsed thoroughly after washing.

The water should be changed regularly when the floor is being washed to ensure that dirt is not mopped back onto the floor. Care should also be taken to ensure that not too much soap or detergent is used as this may leave a film and cause streaks on the floor.

Finally, if you are having problems with moss and algae on outdoor natural stone surfaces, a water and mild bleach solution should do the trick.

We need a new floor for a workshop which will be subjected to oil spills and will have to resist mechanical impact and abrasion from pallet trucks. What do you recommend? Also, we previously had a problem with surface laitance and contaminants when preparing a surface. What do we do to overcome this?

The normal recommendation would be a 5mm epoxy resin screed, which will have a sealed surface so it will not absorb spills, but is also textured so that it has good slip resistance. Also, the hardwearing properties and impact and abrasion resistance of an epoxy floor are some of the main reasons why they are so popular in this type of application.

Regarding your second question, encapsulated shot blasting with vacuum dust recovery or grinding will provide the answer. However, in both instances, take the expert advice of a reputable supplier or contractor; subsequent rectification can be a costly business!

FLOORS, ENCAPSULATED

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE STONE

Both decorative epoxy screeds and industrial epoxy screeds, if using the same type of aggregate with the same measure of hardness can have the same strength against impact resistance, scratch resistance, and general wear and tear.

The source and method of obtaining the grain/aggregate is of vital importance to the strength of the stone and the ultimate strength of the total system.

The best aggregate to use is natural alluvial stone that is obtained from river beds. This stone must contain no less than 99% SiO₂, be washed and fire-dried and have a residual moisture of less than 0,2%. It should also be 100% contaminant- and dust-free.

There are South African companies that sell crushed stone aggregate. These stone aggregates have hundreds of cracks and fissures in them as a result of the crushing process.

These stones when subjected to impact or abrasion can shatter and the flooring system can fail. Bags of this stone can be filled with dust and contamination which will alter the colour and binding ability of the floor.

Therefore always ensure that the stone used is natural, alluvial and uncrushed.

Coloured natural alluvial quartz aggregate has a hardness score on the Mohs (measure of hardness) scale of about 8 with a diamond being 10, whereas crushed stone may not even register a reading because it is so weak.

Heavy-duty epoxy screeds are used very successfully in factories where floors are subject to high-impact wear: forklift traffic and gouging; abrasion and chemical attack. Decorative epoxy screeds, using coloured quartz are not as resilient to high-impact wear and abrasion, but are resistant to chemical attack.

Larger areas may require movement joints, should there be any movement in the underlying screed. Old and damaged concrete floors if prepared by a knowledgeable flooring contractor can be successfully resurfaced in an epoxy screed.

It is important that coloured quartz is polyurethane-coated and not epoxy-coated, as the epoxy-coated stone will yellow over time, which is hugely accelerated by exposure to the sun. Also, screeds that are applied externally must be applied using a polyurethane binding system, otherwise they will begin to yellow and chalk from day one and ultimately fail.

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