

What's the difference between ... all those adhesives?

By DAVID WILSON

EACH of the 40,000 annual calls to BAL's free technical advice line is different, but there are common themes. One regular topic is the differences between adhesive types. It is a fair question, because of the choice available: a fixer walking into their local distributor could see more than 20 different BAL adhesive products.

Suppose that the fixer needs to lay marble floor tiles in a bathroom, onto a suitable timber substrate, with everything needing to be completed within a single working day. The most experienced fixer would simply pick up some BAL Fastflex, the obvious choice: fast-setting, water-resistant and flexible.

Somebody less knowledgeable might not consider every factor affecting the adhesive choice, or not realise the importance of the differences between adhesives.

There are so many different adhesive types because not all jobs are the same and fixers need a variety of products to suit varying requirements. For some projects, any of two or three products might be acceptable, but there are always jobs requiring particular adhesive characteristics. When only one adhesive type will do, knowing the differences matters. The correct adhesive depends upon three key factors: tile type and size, background, and the tiling environment.

Not all adhesives suit every tile material. For the increasingly popular porcelain tiles, which need a specific adhesive, fixers can look for the PorcelBond Plus icon on BAL packaging. Some choices are less obvious. Certain natural stones, such as limestone, travertine and some granite, may be susceptible to water staining and need a fast-setting white adhesive.

Another benefit of fast-setting adhesives over standard adhesives, which generally take 16 to 24 hours to set, is their suitability for jobs which need fast completion. Depending upon the product and the job, grouting could begin within as little as two hours after fixing.

BAL's experts are often asked the fundamental difference between cementitious and ready-mixed adhesives. The simple answer is that acrylic-based ready-mixed products contain water, which they must lose in



order to set. Cementitious products should be kept dry, as adding water starts the chemical reaction that makes them adhere.

In general terms, cementitious adhesives can be used in most applications. Ready-mixes are normally only suitable for internal walls and are not recommended for use with large-format or porcelain and other vitrified tiles, as less joint space and a non-porous background minimises the opportunity to lose water.

Polymer modification raises questions. In basic terms, adding polymers to standard adhesive changes its characteristics. This is done by adding a commercial admixture, such as BAL Admix AD1, to standard cement-based adhesive or by using a pre-modified product.

Either way, the adhesive will tend to offer easier handling, enhanced adhesion and greater durability. Its increased tensile and flexural strength is crucial for use on backgrounds with some movement, such as timber floors. A key benefit for external use is increased water resistance, giving greater resistance to the detrimental effects of freezing and thawing during cold weather.

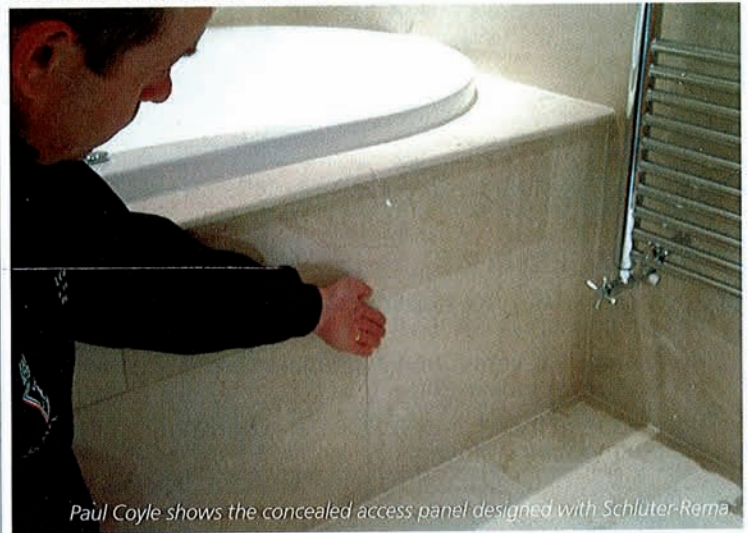
Finally, the launch of BAL Supercover Rapidset has meant fixers asking about the difference between standard and high-yield adhesives. The answer is straightforward: high-yield means that an adhesive does exactly what the standard product does, but it goes further. Kilogram for kilogram, for example, BAL Supercover Rapidset offers 60% more coverage than a standard, fast-setting C1 adhesive.

T 0845 600 1222
W bal-adhesives.com

David Wilson is head of technical services at BAL

Revealing innovation from Schlüter

A SYSTEM for creating concealed access panels in tiled walls worked so well on the front of a Jacuzzi whirlpool bath, that when the tiling installer had finished, the partner of his client did not even know it had been fitted.



Paul Coyle shows the concealed access panel designed with Schlüter-Rema

Paul Coyle, a tiler with 15 years' experience, based in County Durham recommended the Schlüter-Rema system to his client after taking part in a training session on Schlüter's tile protection systems, where he learned about its simplicity and effectiveness.

Paul's client, Mark Pearson, a joiner specialising in staircases, doors and flooring, was extending his house by building a pair of en-suite bathrooms, featuring a sound system and flat screen television, along with an integrated Jacuzzi whirlpool bath, toilet and basin, made out of 16mm polished limestone.

To help keep the aesthetics of the room from being spoilt by an obvious essential access hatch, Paul turned to Schlüter-Rema.

Paul says: "Mark had originally felt the only way he could have an access panel was to have four or more screws with, at best, plastic chrome effect covers. However, with using Schlüter-Rema, the result is a totally concealed

working service hatch, much to Mark's delight."

Consisting of a set of magnets and counterplates, Schlüter-Rema is the ideal system for concealing access panels for many types of electrical and plumbing systems. It works by fixing aluminium brackets containing the magnets, into the tiled wall at the perimeter of the opening, and adhering the counterplates to the back of the tiled panel cover.

By sealing the surrounding joint with a colour co-ordinated sealing compound, the system allows the tiled surface to appear unbroken, while still keeping electronics or plumbing components within easy access.

Paul says: "When I'd finished grouting the walls and floor, and told Mark's partner, Karen, about the service hatch for the Jacuzzi, she replied: 'What service hatch?' It was totally invisible to her."

T 01530 813396
W schluter.co.uk



Paul Coyle (left) with Mark Pearson