



TECHNICAL BULLETIN #2

ADVICE TO WOOD FLOOR CONTRACTORS

EXPANSION PROVISION FOR WOOD FLOORS

Consumers and Contractors alike need to be aware that over the past 5 years, (since 2000), there has been a significant increase in WOOD FLOOR FAILURES, due to a neglect to properly provide for “**expansion**” within the construction of Wood Floors Systems.

Geographic Consideration

There is an increasing failure by contractors to properly assess the “**geographic area**” in which they are going to install wood floor systems and to properly incorporate, **correctly designed expansion provision**, into the wood floor system.

The Building Code of Australia and various Australian Standards nominate specific “**minimum**” requirements. **However**, informed and competent contractors need to make intelligent adjustments to **minimum** requirements whenever one is working in a “**High Humidity**” environment (which also includes - anywhere near a large body of water or rivers or dams).

Apart from providing a **minimum 10** mm void to the perimeter, there has been a tendency in more recent times, to see floors laid hard against tiles to bathrooms / laundries and similar, with **zero** provision for expansion, which can eventually be a part of the reason, for “**floor failure**”!

Cork Expansion Joints and Internal Provision for Expansion

All **one-directional** wood floor systems, spanning more than 6.00 metres (across-the-width of the boards), must include the provision of an **additional 12** mm of **expansion**, built into the flooring system.

This can be done in a number of ways, including:-

- Leaving a 1.00 or 1.50 mm space between various boards within the construction method, to provide for a **minimum** of **12** mm every 6.00 metre width or, part thereof.
- Installing **12** mm **Resin Bonded Cork expansion joints** at particular positions within the floor.

However, whenever using cork expansion jointing, please remember that **12** mm of cork is only the equivalent, of providing for, **5 mm of expansion**, so don't underestimate your need for multiple expansion joints.

Silicone Filling of Perimeter Expansion Joints – “WARNING”

In recent years, the industry has noticed the practice of some contractors, to completely “fill” perimeter expansion voids, with coloured silicon, rather than dress-over an open void with skirtings.

Contractors are “warned” that this practice does **not** conform with the **minimum** requirements of the Building Code of Australia and should floor “failure” be investigated, the use of such means of “filling” expansion voids with silicone, will be reported upon as “**contrary to the requirements of the Building Code of Australia**”, and could well be a contributing factor, leading to wood floor failure, and an expensive rectification order.

In NSW there has been an increasing failure of wood floors since the former State Government tore up the “Licencing” of Wood Floor Contractors and there is now unfortunately, a significant number of people operating within the industry, whose skill, competence and ethics, leave much to be desired.

Specifiers and consumers are well advised to seek out competent organisations whose reputation and long-time track record is well attested.

Remember your wood floor system is the **foundation** upon which everything in your home sits. Unlike a light fitting, if something is not done correctly, this can represent major “drama”.

On the contrary, well installed wood floors can literally last the life of your property, and can add significant asset value to your residence.

So make sure that the decisions that you make are “**well researched**”, and an “**informed**” decision!

Sincerely yours

National Wood Flooring Association of Australia

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