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AWARD OF EXCELLENCE



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Resilient Floating Floor Guide



LVT SUPPLIERS PUSH POTENTIAL OF INNOVATION

By Ken Ryan

Standing out in the increasingly crowded field of luxury vinyl tile players is becoming more difficult, but that obstacle hasn't prevented a bevy of flooring manufacturers from putting their R&D departments to the test. The results are impressive: new wood and stone visuals that are indistinguishable from the real thing and product that can withstand the

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Best of Surfaces awards honor top products, booths

JUDGES RECOGNIZE EXCELLENCE ACROSS SIX CATEGORIES

LAS VEGAS—Six companies were voted best of class in the fourth annual Best of Surfaces competition co-sponsored by *Floor Covering News* and Informa Exhibitions (formerly Hanley Wood), owners and operators of

The International Surface Event (TISE). The awards have become the benchmark for new product excellence and booth design at the industry's premier trade show.

The winners were:

- Innovation: Mohawk SmartStrand Forever Clean
- Style & Design: Johnson Hardwood Alehouse series
- Sustainability: W.F. Taylor

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Mohawk CEO Jeff Lorberbaum accepts the Best of Surfaces award for Innovation from *FCNews* publisher Steven Feldman. Also pictured, from left, are Mohawk's David Duncan and Tom Lape, *FCNews'* Dustin Aaronson and TISE's Christy Lizarraga.

West Coast port gridlock delays deliveries

SLOWDOWN PUTS BRAKES ON SOME FLOORING SHIPMENTS

By Ken Ryan

The ongoing labor dispute between the longshoremen's union and shipowners that has brought crippling delays to West Coast seaports is hurting many flooring importers.

At press time, 29 West Coast seaports that handle about \$1 trillion of goods annually (including flooring) were closed for four of the five days leading up to and through President's Day weekend. The dispute, which to a lesser degree has been going on since November, has escalated in recent weeks.

Caught in the middle are companies that rely on container ships to move goods from China to distribution centers and retail stores in the U.S.

Peter Spirer, CEO of MaxWoods, said the port issue is one of real seriousness and threatens to grow to massive proportions if the dockworkers



Trucks line up at the Port of Los Angeles. Labor strife at West Coast seaports has brought crippling delays and hurt many industries, including flooring.

do not agree to a contract. "Currently, there are dozens of container vessels lying at anchor outside the port of L.A. These are being processed at a snail's

pace to keep the pressure high. The same is the case up and down the West Coast, so moving on to an alternate port is not really an option. I understand that even Houston is backlogged either in sympathy for their fellow longshoremen or because there is too much traffic for them to handle."

Spirer said MaxWoods has 10 containers on these stalled vessels, many of which are sold. The impact on service and cash flow is harsh. "We are diverting other containers from China to make the much longer and more expensive trip through the canal and into an East Coast port. This adds a good three weeks to the

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IN THE NEWS

Haines names new vice presidents

GLEN BURNIE, Md.—Haines has named Mike Barrett and Bill Rothenbach as vice presidents of operations and human resources, respectively. Barrett will lead all Haines Flooring warehouse and delivery functions, while Rothenbach will oversee all Haines corporate human resource functions.



"We look forward to reaping the benefits of their expertise and experience," said Bruce Zwicker, president and CEO. "As Haines continues to grow and evolve we need to increase our management capacity as well as bring to the company new ideas from other industries."

EarthWerks teams with Longust

HOUSTON—EarthWerks will form a new partnership for distribution with Longust Distributing, serving the Southwestern region. Longust will cover Arizona, southern Nevada and Southern California, stocking product at warehouses in Mesa, Ariz.; Las Vegas; Anaheim, Calif., and San Diego. Big D Floor Covering Supplies and JH Freed & Sons will continue to serve customers during the transition.

"Our commitment to style, service and availability is the backbone of our excellence, and we saw Longust as a group that shared our passion for excellence," said Amy Sadler, national sales manager, EarthWerks.

NeoCon East moves to Philly

CHICAGO—The 13th edition of NeoCon East will take place Oct. 28-29 at the Pennsylvania Convention Center in Philadelphia. From its convenient location to its powerful economy,



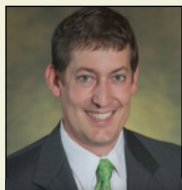
organizers identified the City of Brotherly Love as the ideal host

for the show, enhancing the NeoCon East experience and extending greater benefits to exhibitors and attendees.

"NeoCon East has had many successful years in Baltimore," said Julie Kohl, vice president of sales. "We took the decision to relocate very seriously to ensure that it offers the best solution for our show, our exhibitors and our attendees. We found that in Philadelphia."

Congoleum taps O'Connor as CFO

MERCERVILLE, N.J.—Congoleum has named Chris O'Connor its chief financial officer, effective immediately.



Chris O'Connor

Reggie Chesson, the company's interim CFO, will continue as a consultant to ensure a seamless transition.

"Chris is a strong addition to our management team," said Robert

Moran, CEO. "As the former CFO of CMH Space Flooring Products, industry experience and insight will provide critical support as we move forward with our initiatives."

Regarding his new position, O'Connor said, "In addition to overseeing the financial function at the company, I'm looking forward to joining the dynamic leadership team in working to expand distribution, leverage new product introductions and drive sales through meaningful consumer engagement."

By Ken Ryan

WESTBURY, N.Y.—Empire Today executives and key vendors took part in grand openings of its Commack, N.Y., and Westbury, N.Y., stores Feb. 5—one week after debuting its Fairfax, Va., store. The three openings marked the first time the 55-year-old at-home retailer opened physical stores.

Keith Weinberger, chief merchandising officer, said Empire Today has been working toward the goal of opening brick-and-mortar stores for two years. Along the way it shopped with customers, talked to them, listened to their needs and finally sought to create a store that was easy to navigate and generally consumer friendly in appearance and layout.

Vendors who attended the opening were impressed. "They did a great job merchandising this store," said Bill Schollmeyer, CEO of Johnson Hardwood, who attended the Long Island openings. "It is well laid out. They've created a nice, warm shopping environment and they have a great brand name going for them. I'm excited for them."

Larry Pellegrini, Eastern regional manager for Godfrey Hirst USA, was impressed with the organization of the departments. "It is well categorized with great separation



Paul Carter, Empire Today executive vice president, and The Empire Man cut the ribbon at the Westbury, N.Y., store opening.

between hard and soft surfaces. This is not your typical carpet store. Today's consumer does not want to see clutter; this is an easy store to shop."

All three stores are between 5,000 and 5,500 square feet. The flooring installed in the hard surface area of the Westbury store is luxury vinyl plank, while customers in the soft surface section will walk on carpet

Surfaces exhibitors donate flooring

DALLAS—Dozens of flooring companies exhibiting at The International Surface Event (TISE) in Las Vegas last month committed to donating 140,765 pounds of used flooring to the Mountain Resource Center.

Informa Exhibitions U.S. (formerly Hanley Wood), organizer of Surfaces, anticipated 84 exhibitors donating to the program, which also included another 571,725 pounds of commodity materials that would have otherwise gone to a landfill. Officials from the Mandalay Bay Convention Center said 80% of the total waste generated from the show, held Jan. 21-23, was recycled. Recycled materials included cardboard, carpet, carpet

pads, concrete, metal, aluminum, paper, plastics, wood crates and pallets. Through the established Mountain Resource Center partnership the recycling initiative for TISE is in its fourth consecutive year.

Product donations filled eight 53-foot trailers to capacity and one large flatbed stacked high with rolls of carpet. Donations from the show have more than tripled since the program was launched in 2012.

Major contributors included DuChateau, Dixie, Hallmark, Herregan Distributors, Johnson Hardwood, Kraus, Mannington, Northwood Industrial Machine, Phenix, QuartzSource, QuickStep/Unilin, Stanton Carpet, Tarkett North

from Mohawk, Shaw, Beaulieu and Dream Weaver—Engineered Floors' top brand.

Every aspect of the store was designed with one goal in mind: creating an easier shopping experience for the customer. Within each section, or product "neighborhood," are information boards that provide specific details on the designated categories. One such board may include, for example, the differences of engineered vs. solid hardwood.

Each product on an Empire show floor contains an all-inclusive price tag; in other words, there are no hidden fees. "We feel it is important to make it simple for the consumer and be transparent," Weinberger said. "Customers don't buy flooring often and they get stressed about it. We are trying to take some of that stress away."

Store fixtures include large swatches measuring 17½ x 23 inches. The idea is to provide a generous sample size, but not too big that a customer can't take it home. Paul Carter, executive vice president of Empire Today, said the brick-and-mortar stores will offer a wider selection of products than what is available from Empire's shop-at-home business because the physical locations have more room for samples than what sales representatives can carry in their vehicles.

America and USFloors.

"Sustainability touches all of our lives and businesses, and is truly a social responsibility not to be ignored," said Dana Teague, vice president, Informa Exhibitions U.S. and TISE. "Our participating exhibiting companies and partners are making a positive impact by touching lives of local communities where it matters most."

Pamela Miller, TISE associate show manager, added, "We feel a responsibility to make our participating companies aware of the many ways their recycling efforts can be implemented into their business models."

The lightly used flooring was delivered to two charitable organizations—Habitat for Humanity (Las Vegas affiliate) and River Valley Community Outreach Center in Gridley, Calif., which plans to utilize the materials to support community improvement efforts currently under way.

SNAPSHOT

R.D. Weis celebrates 25th anniversary with friends, customers, family

TARRYTOWN, N.Y.—R.D. Weis and Companies celebrated its 25th anniversary earlier this month at the Westchester Marriot here with over 100 colleagues, customers, family members and friends who have developed relationships with the commercial contractor over the years.

President and founder Randall (Randy) Weis, pictured here, was honored for his deep-rooted dedication to the company, recognized in toasts from Sheri Gorman, vice president of marketing, and Weis' wife, Peggie.

"All of you represent a very common denominator that I think makes the company special, and makes me especially proud of all of you, and that is you're all about the common good," Weis said in his speech at the event. "You're all about supporting each other and there is very little 'me'; it's always 'we' and I think that has made us what we are today."

