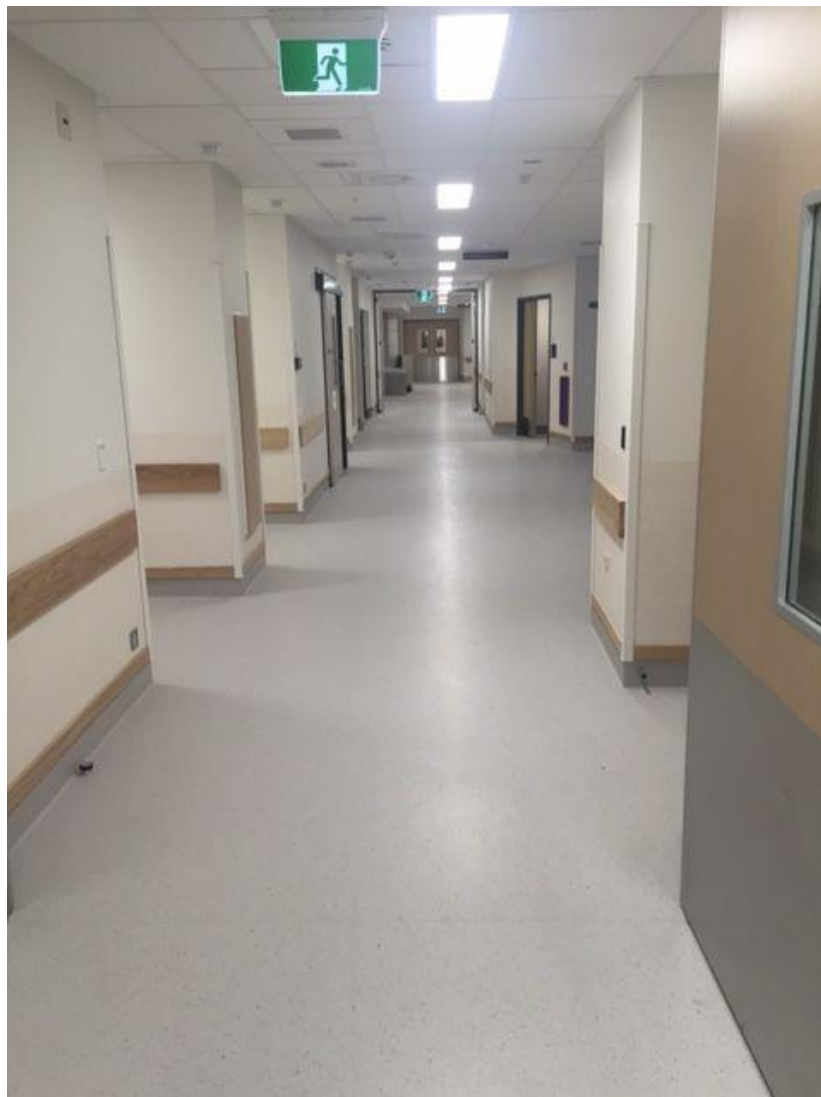


As we know commercial work is often challenging for the flooring industry and a 50,000 m² floor and wall covering install is certainly no exception. Managing Director of The Flooring Centre Steve Musson and his team took on this challenge with the recently completed \$215 million redevelopment of Burwood Hospital which is the largest Government earthquake recovery project in Christchurch East.

With the size of this project and the typical problems that go along with commercial work today, plus having to put into place systems to meet the new Health and Safety legislation, Floor NZ has asked Steve if he would like to share this experience with his Floor NZ members. Steve has kindly obliged with the following article.



Burwood Hospital Project

Recently, The Flooring Centre Ltd undertook a large flooring project at the new Burwood Hospital in Christchurch. This was a large scale project encompassing some 50,000 m² of floor vinyl, wall vinyl and carpet tiles. The thought of undertaking a project of this scale was somewhat daunting and required some serious planning. To do this we firstly put together a skilled management team who could each take on some key responsibilities and aspects of the project. I am happy to share some of the key challenges that we faced, many will be all too familiar to our industry, along with the solutions that we found as follows:

Clear unimpeded work space:

To have any chance of making this project run effectively, it was of extreme importance that we were provided clear unimpeded work space away from other trades. This was an item that we brought up and discussed at length very early with the main contractor. It is fair to say that this was an item that they considered was not possible to provide on a large commercial project. However, we worked through this together and soon developed a strategy where we split the job up into 26 separate zones and programmed our work accordingly. We were given one zone at a time and the main contractor completely screened off our working zone from all other trades. While the flooring trade was working in one isolated zone, no other trades were allowed to enter that zone.

Heating:

One of the biggest challenges was going to be how we deal with the freezing cold conditions in the middle of winter in Christchurch, with all the hassles that go with that, from a flooring perspective. Given that we had isolated work spaces split off in to screened-off zones, we hit on the idea of heating each zone. We researched the best way to do this and came up with 2 custom built commercial glasshouse heaters. They ran on 3 phase power and we left them running 24/7. (Fortunately we didn't have to pay the power bill.) This was a great solution that ensured that our working environment was at a constant 18 degrees C. This not only ensured pleasant working conditions for staff, but it ensured optimum conditions for screeds, adhesives and flooring products.

Health & Safety:

Health & Safety was always going to be a major consideration in undertaking a job like this. We took this very seriously and implemented some great systems to ensure safe conditions for our staff and other workers. Some initiatives included a policy of not allowing any power leads on the floor (all ceiling hung) A clean trip-free work site with a compulsory daily clean out each night. A high level of staff training including daily toolbox meetings before starting each day. Fire Extinguisher training, compulsory PPE and daily H'S' inspections.

Adhesives & Solvents:

An important initiative that we embraced on this site was to endeavour to minimise the use of solvents and solvent based products as much as possible. With a huge quantity of wall vinyl to install we sought an adhesive type that was solvent free and was as effective as traditional solvent based methods. We soon found a high tech' solvent free adhesive that had excellent all round attributes. We obtained a high level of training with this from the supplier, to ensure that we had the required skills to get the most out of this adhesive. This was initially a bit of a challenge but our team quickly adapted and found that this adhesive was just as easy and just as quick to use, but of course was solvent free, meaning a much safer and much better working conditions on site. Having now gained a high level of experience with this adhesive, we are now implementing the use of this initiative to all other projects company wide.

Gas Bottles:

Like most large projects, it wasn't all smooth sailing for us. Unfortunately we had a fire on site caused by a leaking gas bottle. The fire was of a reasonably serious nature but it was contained to one ensuite area. Our staff were well skilled in dealing with this incident and did all the right things. In fact we were given various commendations on how the issue was dealt with on site. In contemplating the inherent dangers of gas bottles, we quickly developed a system of implementing daily leak tests before work begun each day. In fact we placed all gas bottles in a lock-up each night and we implemented a controlled daily test as we issued the bottles each morning.

Regardless of the controls, gas bottles are inherently dangerous. It is my view that our industry needs to adapt to a system of finding alternate ways of heating vinyl. After the fire, some of our staff completely changed to heating vinyl with their hand held electric welders, very successfully.

Communication:

Effective on site communication was imperative. We needed a way to ensure that all parties had the latest information and were clear on various site instructions. We also needed to ensure that we could quickly communicate any site issues to the main contractors on site. On this project we used Aconex and found this to be a quick effective solution for all communications. We could identify problems, upload photographs along with a short description; and within minutes have a solution from the Architect or Builder, without leaving the area we were working in.

Summary:

As with all projects we continue to learn from mistakes and hopefully find ways for continued improvement. Some of the key items learnt from this important project that I wish to share can be summarised as follows:

- Ensure that you undertake high level project planning before starting.
- Build a solid team that have the right skill set for the job.
- Don't accept sub-standard site conditions. Think "outside the box" for solutions.
- Take Health & Safety seriously. It will provide safe and excellent working conditions.
- Have a re-think about solvents and solvent based adhesives. There are excellent alternatives available.
- Have a re-think about Gas Bottles. Try alternate solutions.
- Ensure you have a robust method to communicate effectively with all parties.

In closing I wish to draw your attention to something that seems to have become a seldom used word in commercial contracting of recent times...profit. To implement all of the above to a high level, it is important that you cost your project effectively in the first instance, with high consideration for all costs including the many management and other indirect costs noted above, that will help you run your job successfully and profitably.

Steve Musson
(Managing Director)

The Flooring Centre Ltd

If you have a project that you would like to share with your industry please contact
admin@floornz.org.nz