

GRIPTEC: WHAT SHOULD WE EXPECT? IS THIS THE FUTURE OF ANTI-SLIP TECHNOLOGY?

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Micro grip, In and Out, Slip Stop, GripTec.

In recent years, we have been seeing more and more of these terms (and their variations of the words) emerging up in the tile industry.

What are they, what do they do, and how does it affect the way we handle the tile?

This article attempts to discuss the pros and cons of this new technology, as well as its efficacy in usage.



TILE SLIP RESISTANCE

Before we can talk about the new technology, let us go back to basics and discuss about tile slip resistance. Tiles as floor coverings, need to be able to cover several basic requirements.

Besides aesthetics, one of the requirements is to offer a suitable level of slip resistance for safety reasons, according to the intended usage. Different applications require different levels of slip resistance. For example, a living room floor would not require that high a slip resistance as compared to say, a wet floor of a shower area or car porch.



In Singapore, we have to adhere to standards set in SS485:2022 for slip resistance classification of pedestrian surface materials.

This was adopted from the Australian Standard AS4586:2013. SS485:2022 classifies the slip resistance into 5 categories from P1 (Z) to P5 (V). P1 has the highest contribution to slipperiness (refer annex).

In the production of floor tiles, manufacturers use a combination of glaze and textures to achieve the required slip requirements.

If a non-slip texture is required, this was achieved through the usage of a structured surface, and/or the application of corundum glazes to achieve a rougher surface texture, so as to reduce the chances of slipping. It is useful to note that the higher the slip resistance, the harder it is to clean, and vice versa.

This was the common bugbear of many end users, as many wanted to have a tile which was slip resistant, yet easy to clean and feels nice to walk on.

Please see annex for Specification of Tile slip resistance: https://heritageceramics.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/01/SS-485-2022-Endorsement-notice_221123_192317.pdf





INTRODUCING THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

In recent years, new glazes have emerged that claim to have taken care of this perennial problem of slip resistance vs cleanability.

The glaze is applied before firing, resulting in a tile that is non slip while at the same time retaining a smooth surface finish, comfortable on the feet and yet easy to maintain.

Such a glaze enables the tile to behave like a normal matt tile when dry, but as soon as it comes into contact with water, will exhibit anti slip properties. In our company, we call this GripTec.

You can find out more details about Griptec in these articles:
<https://heritageceramics.com/griptec/>

BENEFITS OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Let's look at some of the benefits of this new technology.

First of all, it feels like a normal matt tile when dry. The anti-slip effect only kicks in when the tile surface is wet. Most people who have installed anti-slip tiles with corundum will know how it feels, the surface tends to be a little too rough to the touch when barefoot. There, tiles with GripTec technology feels comfortable to walk on barefooted.

Secondly, the flexibility of such a material allows it to be used widely in various applications. Traditional anti-slip tiles tend to feel rough to the touch, and are only used in wet areas. It would not be feasible to use the same tile in the living room area. In most cases, different tiles would have to be used. With GripTec, the same tile can be used in both wet and dry areas, thereby achieving a seamless look throughout the home.

With conventional P2/P3/P4 productions, distributors found themselves having to stock various finishes to cater to customers wanting the same colour scheme. It is often quite difficult to achieve a proper balance of inventory, as one surface might sell out faster than the other. With a single finish that performs as a P4 when wet and feels like a P2 when dry, this new technology can help distributors to reduce their size and cost of inventory.

DISADVANTAGES OF THE NEW TECHNOLOGY

Having discussed the pros, we also have to look at the cons. This technology does come with its own unique set of issues as well.

The main issue seems to arise from customers expecting the tiles to be easy to clean, because of the fact that they feel smooth to the touch.

A common scenario goes like this: a couple comes into the tile store, they select a GripTec tile because it suits their needs – nice touch feels and a seamless look in and out of the house. When the tile is installed, the missus experiences difficulty mopping the tile because the mop sticks to the floor. The couple then goes back to the store to make a complaint. What happened? There is nothing wrong with the tile. This is exactly what the technology is doing... making the tile anti-slip when it is wet!

Distributors and resellers have to understand that this material while it ticks the boxes of touch and slip resistance, may not be that easy to clean. Short of using bristled brushes or a jet spray (which may not be possible indoors), customers need to be informed and have expectations managed accept this phenomenon.

CONCLUSION

With more and more manufacturers jumping onto the bandwagon, we will expect to see more of such tile collections in the future.

From a look, feel and touch perspective, the advantages provided by this technology are exceptional.

More than that, proper understanding and education before usage is definitely a must.

If you're interested, feel free to contact us to find out more.

Watch our video tutorial on GripTec:
<https://youtu.be/76FF5Ne9ZKU>





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