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Press Release

Fishman Flooring's Robertson on Installing Stair Treads

BALTIMORE, MD., June 24, 2019 – Jeremy Robertson began his career at Fishman Flooring Solutions in 2004 as a teenager, sweeping floors in the Raleigh, N.C., warehouse. Since then, he has risen through the ranks at Fishman and now serves as the company's territory business manager for the Durham and Triad areas of North Carolina. During his 15 years in the flooring industry, he has seen both the good and the bad in terms of virtually every type of flooring installation. He recently shared his thoughts on installing stair treads and transitions with *FCI*.

Q. How complicated is it to install stair treads compared to installing regular flooring?

A. Installing stair treads has been seen over the years as both more complicated and more tedious than installing flooring because there are multiple steps involved in the process, starting with a great deal of measuring, which is a task by itself. I've had more installers than I can count express to me their frustrations with the time and work involved with stair tread installations. Fortunately, some new products on the market are making these installations much easier than in the past.

Q. What are some of the new technologies and products available for stair treads and transitions?

A. The new angled nose stair treads from Tarkett are a game changer for installers in terms of time and labor. With this new product, it's no longer necessary to use nose caulking in the nose of the tread, as long as the stair is in good condition and the nosing radius is less than one-half inch. The angled nose also eliminates the need to scribe where the tread nosing meets the riser below. Last but not least, contact adhesive tape can now be used to install angled nose stair treads, which is much easier, saves a lot of time, and the steps can be open to traffic immediately.

As for transitions, there's always something new coming out. For example, the new Powerhold LVT trims offer a wide variety of styles, sizes and finishes, including etched aluminum, etched nickel, aluminum, etched bronze and etched brass. Given the popularity of LVT and LVP right now, this new line of trims should be very popular.

In addition, when other types of flooring are used for steps or transitions, Fishman has a unique line of trims and nosings by Tredsafe. They are a mechanically-fastened metal alternative to vinyl nosings and transitions that are traditionally glued down. Some of the Tredsafe nosings and transitions even have a safety insert that

provides slip resistance and a visual safety element to help avoid slips, trips and falls.

Q. What are some common errors that lead to failed installations of stair treads?

A. Failed stair tread installations usually come down to installers cutting corners or being in a hurry. They either don't take the time to properly prepare the substrate before attempting an installation or decide one of the steps in the installation process isn't necessary. That usually results in a failed installation and a costly redo of the job.

Q. What are the three most important factors in successfully installing stair treads?

A. First, make sure the substrate is clean, solid and sound. You'll find this referenced on every data sheet, because it's that important. Second, follow the installation instructions. Failure to follow instructions happens more often than you would think. Finally, pay attention to the details when applying each tread to the steps. For example, if a one-piece tread is involved, it's necessary to make certain that the nosing radius will not require caulking and use a filler strip to eliminate air pockets between the tread and the riser.

Q. How important are transitions to a successful flooring installation?

A. The way I see it, transitions are among the most important items on an installation job. They are essentially the finishing touch to almost every flooring job. Because they are so important, manufacturers like Futura, Tarkett and Tredsafe offer a wide variety of transitions to accommodate any floor. The number of color options has grown substantially, so it's much easier to coordinate transitions with other trims.

Q. Is having the right ambient room temperatures necessary for the successful installation of stair treads and transitions?

A. It's absolutely necessary to have a climate-controlled space when installing stair treads and transitions and to follow the manufacturer's guidelines with respect to relative humidity. If not, there will almost always be issues with expansion and contraction of the stair tread or transition installed.

Q. What are the right questions to ask to determine an installer's qualifications when it comes to stair treads and transitions?

A. The first question to ask is whether they have been factory trained or certified to install the stair treads and transitions specified for the job. Second, can they demonstrate that they have kept up with the latest installation systems and products through training and continuing education. The reputable installers should freely share this information. How these questions are answered is very important because the key to achieving total customer satisfaction is an installer who has been educated and trained properly.

Q. What are the best ways for an installer to improve his or her skill set when it comes to installing stair treads and transitions?

A. The best product manufacturers and distributors are more than happy to train installers and others, because the success of their products in the marketplace is contingent on them being used properly. At Fishman, we welcome installers and customers in general to come in and let us educate them on any of our products, including stair treads and transitions. We occasionally partner with Tarkett to conduct stair tread training, as well as training on the use of other Tarkett products.

Q. Can distributors be a good resource when it comes to finding well-qualified installers of floor treads and transitions?

A. Absolutely! At Fishman, we'll always do what it takes to help our customers find quality installers or educate the installers they currently use so they do things the right way. I can't speak for other distributors, but Fishman deals with many installers every day and we know who can and can't handle various floor covering installations.

Fishman Flooring Solutions, headquartered in Baltimore, Maryland, is the "Solutions Provider" distributor of flooring and flooring installation products. It has approximately 240 employees and 37 branches serving Delaware, Georgia, Indiana, Kentucky, Maryland, New Jersey, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, West Virginia and the District of Columbia. The firm, a division of L. Fishman & Son, Inc., distributes more than 36,000 products for approximately 75 vendor partners. For more information, please go to www.lfishman.com.