

Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM)

The Environmental Impacts of Construction Products

The construction industry consumes vast amounts of natural resources such as energy, water, materials and land. It is estimated that the construction industry is responsible for producing about 70 million tonnes of waste per year. With the current climate of increased environmental awareness the construction industry has come under pressure to reduce its environmental impact.

What is BREEAM?

The Building Research Establishment's Environmental Assessment Method, BREEAM ensures that buildings meet best environmental practice. BREEAM assesses buildings against their environmental impact. The building is then awarded a rating of either, PASS, GOOD, VERY GOOD or EXCELLENT. Many government funded projects require a VERY GOOD or EXCELLENT rating which can increase a project's funding.

Where can BREEAM be used?

Current BREEAM schemes include, offices, retail, industrial, courts, schools, prisons, accommodation, multi residential areas and hospitals

What is the Green Guide to Specification?

The British Research Establishment, BRE publishes the Green Guide to specification. This guide rates individual construction products according to their environmental impact. The ratings range from A-C with A being the most desirable and C being the least. Each product is rated according to twelve individual environmental impacts:

<i>Climate Change</i>	<i>Human Toxicity to Air</i>	<i>Acid Deposition</i>
<i>Fossil Fuel Depletion</i>	<i>Waste Disposal</i>	<i>Eutrophication</i>
<i>Ozone Depletion</i>	<i>Water Extraction</i>	<i>Ecotoxicity</i>
<i>Summer Smog</i>	<i>Minerals Extraction</i>	<i>Human Toxicity to Water</i>

Ecopoints are awarded as a measure of environmental impact. Each construction product is given a "default rating" of A-C and listed in the Green Guide to Specification.

Altro Safety Flooring comes under the PVC Sheet 2mm category and has a Green Guide rating of B

Individual manufacturers can then challenge this rating through environmental profiling to try and improve the performance of their products.

Why is an Environmental Profile important?

Manufacturers of construction products can make environmental statements about their products without ever having to substantiate them. An environmental profile provides a way of presenting the overall environmental impact of a building product and enables competing products to be compared in a one stop shop for environmental information for the construction industry.

What is an Environmental Profile?

Manufacturers undergo environmental profiling in the hope of improving their rating. An environmental profile of a construction product such as PVC sheet flooring is a cradle to grave life cycle assessment. This includes:

- Consumption of energy and generation of waste associated with the manufacture and extraction of raw materials.
- Transport of these raw materials to the Altro site
- Consumption of energy, generation of emissions to air and waste associated with the manufacture of Altro safety flooring.
- Transport of finished product beyond the factory gate
- Installation, maintenance and disposal of products at end of life.

Assessment of the above information results in a further A-C rating, manufacturers can then decide whether to publish this new rating in the Red Book which is used by architects and specifiers following BREEAM.

How do Altro's Products perform?

We currently have an A rating for Altro Maxis Suprema only. It is the presence of the clear coat itself which differentiates its performance from the rest of the ASF range. The clear coat has a lower environmental impact.

All other ASF products only achieved a B rating when profiled. Although the Green Guide to Specification does not list resin floor finishes or PVC wall coatings, it is possible that these products can undergo environmental profiling in the same way as ASF.

Timbersafe will undergo environmental profiling to gain a Green Guide Rating in summer 2007 and its performance is expected to be very similar to Suprema.

BREEAM is changing!

In summer 2007, BREEAM is changing! The A-C ratings will be expanding from A⁺ to E⁻ and the way the information is assessed will also change. Each product that currently has been awarded an A – C rating will be reassessed using the new criteria and awarded a new rating. At this time we do not know how the new changes will impact on our products or how they will compare to our competitors. We will be able to use our current A rating for Suprema alongside the new one for 12 months.

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