



Acclimatise or not acclimatise? Is that the only question?

Last month I discussed the issue of timber movement and all this dry weather. The logical progression for this discussion is the old chestnut of acclimatisation of timber flooring. Some say you should let your new flooring acclimatise for at least two weeks to ensure it is at the right moisture content for the house. Is two weeks enough? How do you know what the moisture content is? What should it be? What happens to the timber as it acclimatises? What do the Australian Standards say? Here are a few tips on handling and understanding your flooring prior to laying.

How to measure moisture content, or MC. There are several types of meters to measure MC. Pin type resistance meters and surface meters are the common tool for timber yards and contractors. These are portable devices which give quick readings of the moisture content, are pretty accurate but readings must be re calibrated according to species. Correction tables are readily available. Saw mills usually employ the oven dry method when drying timber. A small sample is weighed then dried in an oven until it stops losing weight. By working out the weight of water lost the starting MC can be determined.

What MC should my timber be? Australian Standard 2796 says your flooring should not exceed 14% on delivery. It also allows for a couple of percent variation between boards. When your flooring arrives on site its MC should be checked. If it is too high then you should alert your supplier immediately. Failure to do this will mean any claims later on for wet flooring will be almost impossible to substantiate. The right MC for laying a floor will be determined by a number of factors such as location, heating and cooling within the site. As a general guide, somewhere around 10% or less is about right for Canberra and around 14% or even higher may apply at a place like Batemans Bay.

So, do I acclimatise? The process of acclimatisation is designed to get your timber to a MC close to what it will be in service. This MC will vary as conditions in the building change so you can only expect to get it "in the zone" To start with you should have some idea about the target MC and then you should

measure the actual MC of the timber. You should also consider the conditions under which acclimatisation will take place. It's no point undertaking the process during extreme conditions as this can be counter productive. Some common sense and a little thought is required here. You also need a moisture meter.

How to acclimatise. The flooring should be stacked within the building in such a way that allows air flow around all of your boards. Boards that can't breathe will not adjust and then you are likely to have greater variation between boards. Timber that is exposed on the ends but smothered in the middle can change unevenly. Generally in Canberra we are trying to get the MC a little lower. With a change in MC comes a change in width so if the boards dry on the ends and not the middle the width on the ends will be narrower. This can create a range of problems later. If you choose to acclimatise you must check the MC at the start and the end. You must stack the boards properly to allow even airflow and it must be done on the site. It's also a fact that timber will continue to react to climatic change so acclimatizing will not stop this, it is simply a management tool that may be used. For further advice, feel free to talk to us.

Welcome Rob.

February saw the arrival of Rob Calvert at Monaro Timber. Rob will be known to many of you from his days with Laminex and CSR. He has a long history in the building industry and we were lucky to lure him to Monaro Timber. Rob will look after flooring and decking sales primarily but will also be available to assist in other areas. With his experience in the board and panel industry he will be able to help with those enquiries too. Drop in and say hello. Rob's looking forward to meeting all our regulars.

That's it for another month..

Cheers *Shaun*

Questions or comments? E-mail us at shaun@monarotimber.com.au or call 02 6280 6467

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8.00—4.30 weekdays.
8.00—12 noon Saturdays