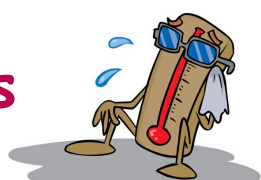


Monsoon Mania

Useful tips as precautions during installation of acoustical walls & ceilings in interiors during the critical monsoon season

Humidity Is a Problem



The interior environment of a construction site is always high on humidity given the residual dampness from civil works and high population of work crews from different services all working simultaneously towards meeting impossible project timelines.

Often times the civil works are not fully completed, for example, the wall plastering or floor PCC work is on and the main contractor is constrained to commence the false ceiling and/or wall panelling works in order to deliver the completed project to client.

During monsoon season the external humidity is very high and this means the interior humidity due to natural dampness of civil works and high-wattage lamps used by work crews, that generate lots of heat, results in steam cooker conditions of RH99 at 40+°C which is harmful for acoustical panels.

No Ideal Solution



It is not possible to reach an ideal situation of sequencing itemized works nor is it possible to extend project timelines indefinitely. Hence here are a few practical tips and trade tricks to see you through successful snag-free installation of acoustical panels that are usually sensitive to the environment.

Sequence Acoustics Last



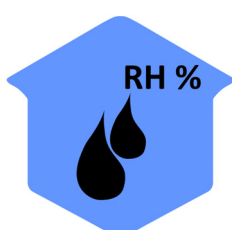
Acoustical tiles and panels are usually the finishing surface of a ceiling or wall. Hence, similar to any fabric or wallpaper treatment, they must be installed last in sequence after all the services and interior works are done that includes carpeting and airconditioning is switched on

But Frame It First



This means the suspension system of the ceiling and framing hardware on walls must be installed first along with other services and interior works because this usually involves dust and noise nuisance. Even acoustic infill like SynthPF can be positioned in place and the installation made ready in all respects to receive the surface finishing panel.

Acoustics Is Sensitive



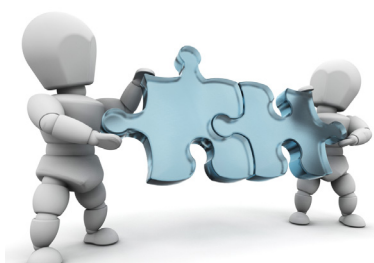
Acoustic panels being made of softfibre or wood-based or fabric-wrapped or composites are usually sensitive to harsh environments and manufacturers recommend their installation under standard occupancy conditions. In industry parlance this means RH65 at 27°C (max RH70 at 30°C) which during monsoons is achievable only with air-conditioning.

Handle With Care



Moreover those acoustical panels with a superwhite finish like Subtex Nubby, Stretch SLS or fabric-based like Subtex NRC, Soak Cord are super sensitive to fingerprints and dust so it makes sense to install them only when the carpeting is done and furniture comes in. Plus there are wood-based panels like Slats that are super sensitive to high humidity and dampness. Again makes sense to install CC18 and SynthPF while waiting out for others to finish before Slats are fixed.

Expansion Joints



Finally some installations like Slats require expansion joints at every few meters due to their high coefficients of linear expansion. This is a product characteristic born out of material sciences that represents a physical phenomenon. Hence it is best to account for it rather than counter it with butt-joint seamless finishes. The latter can result in warpage and the need for a re-install with provision for expansion joints.

Quick Easy Remedies



If an installation is made under adverse conditions and snags have cropped then its best to resolve at source. If fungus has developed on Slats, for example, then remove the sources of dampness in the room and dehumidify the air by switching on the AC and hey presto the problem vanishes. Blame the product and replace it and the problem resurfaces.

If panels like Slats are installed at 600mm centres with no expansion joints then re-installation with additional framing of CC18 in between (resulting in 300mm centres) and cutting of tongue edges from panels at expansion joints will help retrieve the installation. This will in no way detract from the overall aesthetics as the architects and designers intended

If damp patches appear on Strand then again the board is breathing and doing its work of bringing equilibrium to the atmosphere by absorbing excess humidity. Remove the sources of high humidity and Strand will be back to the pristine original glory.



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