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Corian surfaces ripped off by copycat traders

DuPont is cracking down on firms across the region using its name on their products

by Monika Grzesik

One of the world's largest construction product companies has slammed the regional industry for using cheap imitation products.

Market leader in the surfaces duPont, says its 'Corian' surfacing product is being peddled off by unscrupulous merchants selling cut-price imitations across the Middle East. And there are at least 20 companies using its name throughout the region, says Tony Azzam, manager, DuPont Surfaces - a subsidiary of the US \$0 billion-turnover DuPont conglomerate.

The company will soon celebrate the 40th anniversary of its invention of Corian - a 100% acrylic man-made surface.

The material is used in interior applications such as kitchens, work surfaces and countertops.

But as developers in the Gulf eye under increasing cost pressures, manufacturers are producing sub-standard materials under the 'Corian' name.

"There are a lot of imitations in the market," said Azzam. Manufacturers use 'Corian' as generic name but it is a registered trademark by DuPont in 11 countries of the world. Only he can make Corian.

The problem of imitations has become so prevalent that DuPont is threatening to take legal action against any company that misuses its brand name. And it has already launched proceedings against another firm using the name to sell its products in the UAE.

"We are very vigilant when it comes to this issue. We hear of manufacturers producing imitations all the time. There are three or four in the UAE. Saudi has around 20 and only yesterday someone mentioned 'Alman Corian'," he added.

Azzam says that cost-cutting is becoming a major issue in the Middle East. "There is a huge problem with the use of low quality materials in the Gulf," he said.

"We are always complaining about this. We have seen specifications by leading consultants in Dubai - well recognised names in the industry - that are buying materials known for being bad quality. I won't say who; it would be unprofessional to name and shame."

DuPont, which invests close to \$1.2 billion a year in R&D, has a science station that employs 3,000 Ph.D. students to work on new developments - including research into surface technologies.

This year the company has come to Big 5 to launch two new lines, 'Montelli', aimed at the commercial market where budgets are an issue, is a blend of acrylic and polyester; it is around 30% cheaper than Corian and Zodiaq, which is a quartz surface with polyester binding.

The surfaces are available in a range of around 30 colours and come with a 10-year warranty. Man-made surfaces have a number of advantages over natural materials including stain resistance, impact resistance, colour consistency, seamless joints and thermal formability.



Azzam says that specification of low quality products is common in the region as firms look to cut costs.

Inside...



News

German firm KTI is taking advantage of high temperatures in the Gulf by promoting its concrete cooling technology. [Page 7](#)



Country Profile

Oman is investing heavily in infrastructure and port developments while keeping a close eye on its cultural roots. [Page 14](#)



Time Out

OW brings you the guide to restaurants, bars, golf courses, shopping malls, skiing and water parks in Dubai. [Page 17](#)



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Gemini offers therapeutic water tanks

German company Gemini GmbH and its Dubai based distributor Desert River have introduced the latest models in their decorative Aqua Window range at this year's Big 5. The decorative product is made of glass and water, and can create a calming atmosphere in offices, reception areas, homes, spas, restaurants and many more locations.

Rainer Papsdorf, general manager, Gemini, said: "The Middle East region and the UAE in particular is booming as never before and we have seen an increased demand for special effects for windows and partitions. We are confident of the strong requirement for our type of high quality and stylish decorative product. We are having such a positive response to the range at the exhibition — mainly from contractors and designers for hotels and offices across the region."

The Aqua Window is patented and can be customised. For example, company logos and product pictures can float between window panes. The water tank is filled with distilled water to prevent the water becoming stale.

EKA Group floor to de

Under-floor AC technology is cleaner, i

An air conditioning concept that has featured in Europe for a number of years is beginning to take hold in Dubai, with the EKA Group at the forefront of pushing the benefits of under-floor cooling.

The company is currently in talks with a consultant about installing the product in a speculative 45,000 m² office development in Dubai. Ensuring a building is constructed in such a way as to allow it be modified and not become obsolete is one of the primary concerns facing developers today, said Pantelis Kouzis, overseas business development manager, EKA.

"It isn't just the direct expense of building, it is the life cycle cost of the building people have to consider," said Kouzis, who referred to a study conducted by AT&T that found operational costs accounted for 50% of a building's life cycle costs. Too often, he said, developers look simply at up-front



Kouzis: "Architects and consulta