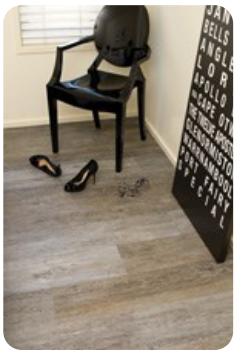
# Vinyl flooring proves sustainable, environmentally friendl

Polyflor has released its sustainability achievements reached during the past financial year, posting its 7th *Annual Sustainability Report* to prove that vinyl flooring is considered to be an environmentally sound and responsible choice.



According to Tandy Coleman-Spolander, sales and marketing director for Polyflor SA, "Vinyl is a cost-effective multi-faceted plastic that has become a necessity in everyday life due to its flexibility, durability, performance and functionality. Used in flooring, cables, windows, packaging and medical equipment including blood bags and surgical tubing, this material is irreplaceable for many of its lifesaving application Until recently, however, PVC was not considered an environmentally responsible building or décor materia

## Industry push to promote vinyl

Through the company's internal efforts and its membership to industry bodies such as the Southern Africa Vinyls Association (SAVA), the company and PVC industry is making good on its commitment to increase responsibility and sustainability within the industry, as a whole and to promote the benefits of vinyl in terms its safety in use, energy efficiency and recyclability.

"Over its whole life cycle, vinyl floor covering performs comparably or better than competing materials across a range of impacts. Thanks to the development of modern manufacturing processes, vinyl floors have a low environmental impact and are beneficial, within a multitude of uses, where no other material cou perform as well or as cost effectively."

## High use of natural materials

The company's ranges use predominantly natural materials. "Our homogeneous range of luxury vinyl tiles, for example, uses up to 85% natural materials, such as calcium carbonate fillers. The high abundance of tl material in the earth's crust makes it a sustainable material and its use diminishes the polymer content, thu reducing the usage of oil. The unique composition of the floors also makes it extremely practical and durable. With a typical life span of twenty years or more, we negate the need for short term replacements and subsequent energy consumption," she explains.

## No greenwashing

Despite these credentials, the company is mindful of the dangers of 'greenwashing' and has gone to grea lengths to ensure it has sound environmental credentials and systems in place.

"Transparency is crucial at a time where environmental issues become increasingly important and companies seek commercial advantage wherever they can." As an example, the company's report states that it only recycled 164t (tons) of liquid waste in 2010, compared to 210t in 2009. However, the reason fo this reduction is due to the fact that it produced less waste that needed to be recycled.

Another achievement is the improvement in energy efficiency. The amount of energy required per $m^3$ of material produced has continued to fall year on year, down to 2.84kWh/$m^3$. This represents a 43% drop in energy used since 2000. At the same time, its carbon emissions have also reduced by 16 410t since 200

"Vinyl is exceptionally energy efficient to produce and embedded energy is further reduced when recycle material is used in place of raw materials. PVC has a relatively low carbon footprint and is equivalent in weight to 1kg of frosted cornflakes, both at 1.9g CO2. Recycled PVC is just 0.3kg CO2."

## Ease of maintenance reduces cleaning materials, water

The products' ease of maintenance also means that energy intensive cleaning is not required and harsh chemical cleaners, polish, strippers and water usage are massively reduced, if needed at all. As a materia is ideally suited to being recycled. It is 100 % recyclable and can be recycled many times over without los any of its performance properties. If it is not recycled, vinyl has a high calorific value and may be safely incinerated with energy recovery. Landfill is the last option, but this is done safely and so the vinyl remains chemically inert without producing leachate.

"Vinyl is the most thoroughly researched, tested plastic material, meeting all international health and safety standards as per the intended application. Whilst having achieved a great deal in recent years, the compa is by no means 'perfect' and realises it has an environmental impact just as all manufacturers do. However we are acutely aware of our responsibility to minimise this impact and will continue to strive towards buildin an international business that is both environmentally and economically sustainable," she concludes.

To view the environmental report, go to www.polyflor.com.