

PCA Statement on using insulation in floor construction with Type C waterproofing systems

Over the last year the Property Care Association (PCA) has come under increasing pressure to produce guidance on using insulation in floor construction where it is protected with a cavity drainage membrane as part of a waterproofing system.

There are opposing views on this subject amongst members of the Association. We have attempted to disentangle these contradictory opinions and provide definitive guidance. However it has become increasingly clear that general consensus cannot currently be reached.

With that in mind, we have decided that the most responsible approach to the subject is to prepare a statement that sets out the position (as viewed by the PCA) and establish liability for any advice that is provided on the subject.

Introduction

When designing basement waterproofing systems it is fundamentally important to be fully conversant with what you are doing. Structural below-ground waterproofing should only be undertaken and designed by specialists and experts that are experienced and capable of understanding the challenges.

All members of the PCA Structural Waterproofing Group (SWG) fully understand the implications of the work they design, specify and install in addition to the operational and technical implications of getting it wrong.

We are fortunate that the UK waterproofing industry is serviced by a number of highly professional and technically advanced Product Manufacturers and Distributors. These companies are relied upon for their assistance in the design and detailing of many structural waterproofing projects.

It is clear that in some aspects of waterproofing design, opinions will differ with respect to the best way to achieve the desired result. This can be true while still observing the protocols set out in BS8102:2009 and working in accordance with Best Practice Guidance for Types A, B and C Waterproofing Systems as published by the PCA in 2015.

It is absolutely essential that where construction details or specific design advice is provided by the Product Manufacturer or Distributor, they can only be held liable for their advice provided they are supplied with accurate information about the site and when the guidance they supplied, is followed to the letter.

It is the view of the Association that all product suppliers or external agencies that provide design advice must carry professional liability for the information that they provide, and that it is subsequently relied upon by contractors and clients.

Conclusion

The PCA will not be providing a definitive opinion or detailed technical design guidance relating to the use of Insulation (specifically for floor design) as part of a waterproofing solution.

The PCA recognises that it has a responsibility to provide information on best practice but cannot be placed in a position where it may carry design liability. Furthermore, the PCA will not pronounce on design that shows technical bias to one methodology over another. This is particularly true where it recognises that differing strategies can be effective in appropriate conditions, if applied strictly in accordance with the detailed advice and if products are used that have the correct performance characteristics.

Members undertaking any basement waterproofing work have a responsibility to understand the implications and risks of what they are designing and ensure that the correct products, materials and designs are employed correctly. They must be confident any system will be robust, reliable and that they have fully discharged their contractual liabilities.

We would remind members that although product suppliers have a responsibility and a legal liability for the advice they provide, ultimately, if the job goes wrong, the buck stops with the contractor!