



## NEW CRA MEMBERS DIRECTORY

The CRA has just published an updated version of its informative Members Directory, which is specifically designed to be of practical, every-day use to Specifiers, Consultants, Surveyors, Local Authorities and Clients. The latest edition includes details of two new members and updated information on the CRA's thirty-two other members, comprising the vast majority of the UK's established concrete repair contractors and product manufacturers.



The handy 52 page, one-third A/4 booklet, provides information on each member company. Head Office and Regional Office details, contact names, a description of the company's specialist concrete repair activities (in the case of manufacturers - its products), areas of operation and third party accreditations, are all included. To assist when compiling tender lists for concrete repair work, each contractor's entry includes information on contract values catered for, the company's largest contract to date, its total turnover and approximate annual business in specific concrete repair related work.

The Directory also contains details of the technical advisory assistance available from the Association, its NVQ related training scheme, Codes of Practice and publications, as well as names and addresses of associated organisations. The bibliography of related literature has been augmented and is now listed under individual concrete repair activities. Copies can be obtained free of charge from the Secretary, telephone 01252 739145.

# NECESSITY

## - THE MOTHER OF INVENTION ?

In its last edition, Cracking Matters highlighted the problems currently being experienced with rocketing insurance premiums, up in some instances up by an incredible 1,000%. This is not just the case for the concrete repair sector, but for the construction business as a whole. For some reason insurance companies appear to have it in for the industry.

The problem is, of course, that increased costs, such as insurance, are not easily passed on. They hit right at the 'bottom line' and can, in some instances, force companies into liquidation. Mind-boggling increases of 1,000% can only be described as farcical. If any other industry planned its pricing strategy in such a manner, it would be out of business before you could say "Jack Robinson".

Perhaps more worrying is that sometimes such desperate circumstances can be the catalyst for some organisations adopting reckless solutions.

As most people are aware, today's computerised technology makes it a simple task to scan documentation and doctor it, if required. Given the current difficulties with insurance, it would be quite easy to take last year's cover note, scan it, change the dates

and eliminate the problems of increased premiums in one fell swoop. Such documentation could be presented to clients who, unless they had the time and inclination to check it out with each and every insurance company, would probably accept it as bone-fide. Should the paperwork be worthless, it would prove extremely tricky if site problems were to develop once a project was underway.

*... today's computerised technology makes it a simple task to scan documentation and doctor it, if required ...*

The Concrete Repair Association has no evidence that this is indeed what is happening in the market place, but it has decided to keep its own house in order by assuring client and specifiers alike that all of its members are suitably covered. It is therefore carrying out the checking procedure on behalf of the client.

Currently, the CRA Secretariat is requesting insurance certification from each CRA member and double-checking its authenticity with the denoted insurance companies.

The initiative is directly in line with the original principles of the Association - to provide the construction industry with

access to companies operating to the highest standards of quality, safety and reliability, with a proven track record and overall capability in this specialist construction sector. Each full member is also obliged to be Q.A. accredited to ISO 9000, to comply with the Association's stringent Codes of Practice and its training requirements.

The CRA hopes that given the current insurance predicament, this initiative will be taken on board by other trade Associations within the industry.



## INSIDE

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## Efficient CHIPS! reducing risks and protecting people

If you use chemicals or substances on your construction site, you may have heard of CHIP, CHIP 2000 or even CHIP 3, but what do these terms mean and will you need a degree in chemistry to understand them?

CHIP 3 is a requirement we all need to understand, in order to help us follow the law. Many construction and refurbishment projects now involve the use of various materials for the application of specialist repair or strengthening techniques. Recent changes in the health and safety law have impacted on the use of these specialist materials and the chemicals they contain. The Health & Safety Executive has, therefore, revised the regulations for the supply of chemicals within the construction industry, with the introduction of CHIP 3.

CHIP 3 stands for the Chemicals Hazard Information and Packaging for supply Regulations 2002. It came into force on

24th July 2002. The Regulations are specifically aimed at suppliers of specialist chemical materials but they also impact on the applicator, designer and the end client. Under Construction Design & Management (CDM) regulations, all parties have a responsibility towards health and safety and this encompasses the specification, selection and use, on site, of specialist chemical materials. The aim of CHIP 3 is to ensure that people who have chemical products supplied, receive information from the supplier to enable them to protect themselves, others and the environment. The client needs to be aware of his/her responsibilities to the environment when using such construction materials on their project.

To achieve this, CHIP 3 requires suppliers to identify all hazards (e.g. flammable, toxic, etc) and to pass on this information to the user. The information will be clearly marked on the packaging

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# CONSTRUCTIONLINE: Assisting clients and concrete repairers alike

By: Brian Gardiner, Constructionline

Constructionline, Government owned and operated by Capita, is the UK's largest register of pre-qualified construction services. As part of the Rethinking Construction initiative, it offers commercial gains to clients and the construction industry, improving efficiency by streamlining procedures, by supplying clients with centrally maintained data about firms used at the start of the procurement process.

Constructionline removes the need for firms to submit to each client, contract by contract, first stage information and supporting documents, by:

Vetting and maintaining basic information on:

- Company registration and contact details
- Tax certification
- Annual accounts
- Technical competence through references
- Licences and certificates.

Holding information regarding:

- Management details (and associated companies)
- Staff skills and qualifications
- Health and safety, Equal opportunities and Race Equality information.

Constructionline helps to satisfy first stage pre-qualification, saving time for clients and contractors/consultants. Since the basic operation of Constructionline is to assess firms, there is no requirement for clients to carry out their own pre-qualification activity. A 'long list' of pre-qualified firms can be generated directly from the Constructionline database, against live data over the Internet. The resulting 'freeing-up' of resources can be re-focused to deliver more efficient and effective services. Clients' approved or select lists of firms are invited to join the Constructionline register and benefit from increased exposure to a nationwide network of clients.

Constructionline currently has over 1,600 public sector clients accessing live information on over 12,100 registered contractors and consultants at national and local levels. Over half of these are small or medium-sized enterprises. More than 500 works categories are listed offering over 6,000,000 pre-qualified construction activities from which to select.

Currently, twenty-four specialist concrete repair companies are registered on Constructionline, covering a wide range of activities and concrete treatments. Clients specify search criteria by accessing live data over the Internet, are able to find and locate firms that match their pre-qualification requirements. In the past twelve months, CRA



In 2002, the Local Government Task Force reported on Constructionline as part of a wider government review of efficiency and economy within the construction sector. The report credited Constructionline with a savings potential for the public sector of "many millions of pounds". One County Council, with a construction programme of £60 million, is quoted as having saved £20,000 per annum through partial use of Constructionline, whilst a London Borough with a programme of £30 million reported an annual saving of £60,000 by using the register as its sole procurement database.

This report was followed up in April 2003 by a second report reviewing the original recommendations made to improve Constructionline's services. This second report praised Constructionline for a real improvement in service quality and a dramatic rise in both

members have received 1,650 individual enquiries via Constructionline clients.

The 'Search' focuses primarily on Financial, Work Type and Location. All firms are rigorously financially vetted and have a 'Notation' value set against each 'Specialist Works Category'. The notation value is based upon the firm's audited accounts and their technical references. This represents the Constructionline recommendation of the value of work that can be undertaken by the firm. Clients specify the value of their contract, thereby including all firms that have a suitable Notation value. Firms with a lesser value will be excluded from the search.

'Work Categories' relevant to concrete repair cover Civil Engineering, Pavement Construction, Building External and Internal Finishes, Building Structure and Additional Services. Within these broad categories there are 18 specialist categories applicable to the Concrete Repair Association members. These are Bridge Strengthening and Refurbishment, Concrete Repairs, Concrete/Masonry Stabilisation, Bridge Deck Waterproofing, Waterproofing (Structural), Concrete Repairs (Highways), Car Park Waterproofing, Damp Proofing, Rendering, Shot & Grit Blasting, Concrete Scoring and Grooving, Building Maintenance (Building Façade) Cleaning (Blast & Pressure), Cleaning (Graffiti), Insulation (Building), Over-cladding, Insulation (Sprayed) and Wall Tie Replacement. CRA members may add Specialist Works Categories to their Constructionline record by supplying further technical references at any time.

Both the locations of the contract and of the firm (or its branch office) may also be specified enabling clients to invite tenders from locally based companies.

Constructionline carries out a full annual re-assessment on all firms.

clients and registered construction companies. In particular, it noted that:

- Access speeds for clients and contractors have been considerably enhanced thanks to the new website, servers, firewall and high-speed line, as well as improved technical support from the help desk and technical support teams.
- The amount of out-of-date information on contractors is diminishing thanks to firms being required, and prompted, to supply non-dated information annually rather than triennially and greater flexibility on when firms can update their details.
- Constructionline has refocused its Business Consultants to concentrate on the quality of relationships with existing clients, to enable them to maximise the many benefits of using Constructionline.

Constructionline is free of charge to client users. Operational costs are borne entirely by subscriptions from contractors and consultants. Fee scale is based upon turnover, with a subsidised annual registration fee for smaller companies, which starts at £70.

For further information on Constructionline and how it can help your organisation, visit [www.constructionline.co.uk](http://www.constructionline.co.uk) or call 0870 162 1602 (clients) or 0870 240 0152 (firms).

ENQUIRY NO: 1113

## NEWS from CRA Members

Use the enclosed Fax-Back to obtain more information

### INDEPENDENT AND RELIABLE

As an ISO9002 accredited company and member of the Concrete Repair Association, with a wealth of experience both at home and overseas, The Concrete Consultancy 2000 Ltd is able to offer Engineers, Consultants and Surveyors a truly independent and reliable service for the assessment and testing of reinforced concrete structures. Employing the latest and most cost-effective access and analytical techniques, our clients are assured of both a professional and practical service from initial enquiry, through site and analytical works to the final report, recommendations and assistance with specifications.

For more details telephone: 01707 647266, or mobile: 07775 940896

ENQUIRY NO: 1102



### MARGEL - A FAST AND EFFECTIVE CONCRETE REPAIR REMEDY

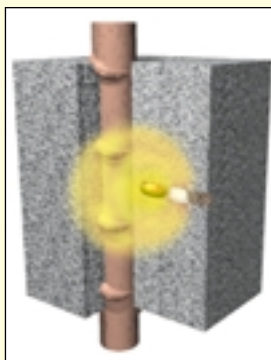
Margel DCI 580T, a complex blend of Vapour Phase Inhibitors from Makers UK Ltd., is a proven method of installing corrosion inhibitors directly into concrete, adjacent to the embedded steel reinforcement, to tackle the problem of reinforcement corrosion.

Margel contains three phases of inhibitor that are given off as vapours over time. The vapours are transported through the concrete pore structure and adsorbed onto the reinforcing steel. The adsorbed coatings shut out oxygen, one of the fuels of corrosion, thereby preventing the steel from rusting. Margel is simple to install, even in areas with access difficulties and can be placed without the need to remove existing coatings or finishes.

For further information contact Mike Darby on 01462 477333

Email: [marketing@makers.co.uk](mailto:marketing@makers.co.uk)

ENQUIRY NO: 1103



### 'SMART' INSTARMAC



Since receiving a Government 'SMART' award (worth £141,000 of a £500,000 research programme) toward the development of a super-fluid micro-concrete technology, the Instarmac Group plc material Cemflow MC, has evolved into a market-leading brand. Following many years of development, to satisfy the requirements of the tough Midlands Links specification BD27/86 Clause 4 1704.6 and Class 29F repair concrete, Cemflow MC was selected for carrying out deck end and cross beam repairs on Contract MM102, the largest contract ever awarded on this major repair programme. Cemflow MC contains an additive that when mixed within the raw components, is able to control its rate of hydration. In addition to being fully shrinkage compensated and compatible with cathodic protection techniques, the material also complies to the model requirements for highways works, clause 1704.6; control of alkali-silica reaction. For more details telephone 01827 872244

ENQUIRY NO: 1104

### NEW BROCHURES FROM CRL

Specialist main contractor, Concrete Repairs Ltd (CRL) has just published three new brochures. The first deals with bridge maintenance services from Concrete Repairs Ltd (CRL), the second explains hospital refurbishment services available through CRL Refurbishment and the third describes the company's concrete surveying services from CRL Surveys. Multi-disciplined bridge maintenance services include civils and concrete repair works, corrosion control and composite strengthening, together with associated operations such as new bearing replacements, bridge deck joints, deck waterproofing, post tensioning, vehicle/pedestrian barrier installation, lighting and electrical works. Hospital refurbishment services include the remedying of structural defects, improvement of the building's visual appearance and impact on the environment, its energy demands and medical needs. CRL Surveys offers unique and independent palliative, indicative, statistical and full survey procedures together with reports on load testing, structural detailing and fire damage. For copies, telephone 020 8288 4848.



ENQUIRY NO: 1101



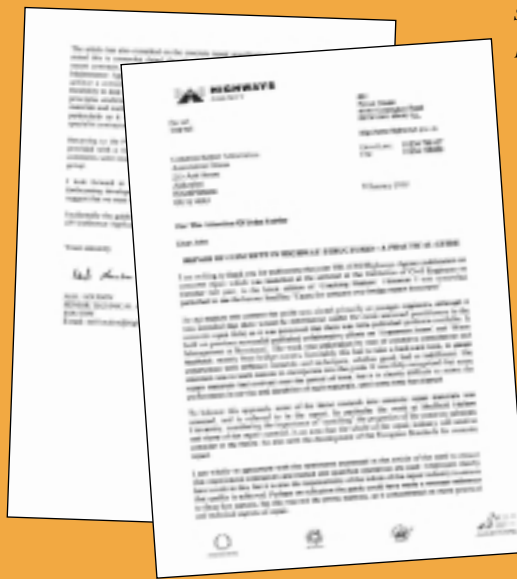
# RIGHT OF REPLY

The following letter was received from Neil Loudon, Senior Technical Adviser, Highways Agency, in response to the article entitled 'Cause for concern over highway bridge repair document', which was published in the last edition of Cracking Matters. At the CRA, we believe in the right of reply and with the agreement of Mr. Loudon, publish below the full content of his letter.

Dear Sirs

## REPAIR OF CONCRETE IN HIGHWAY STRUCTURES - A PRACTICAL GUIDE

I am writing to thank you for publicising the joint TRL/CSS/Highways Agency publication on concrete repair, which was launched at the seminar at the Institution of Civil Engineers in October last year, in the last edition of 'Cracking Matters'. However, I am somewhat perturbed to see the banner headline 'Cause for concern over bridge repair document'.



To set matters into context, the guide was aimed primarily at younger engineers, although it was intended that there would be information useful for more

seasoned practitioners in the concrete repair field, as it was perceived that there was little published guidance available. It was built on successful published collaborative efforts on 'Expansion joints' and 'Water Management for Durable Bridge Structures'. The work was undertaken by way of extensive consultation and feed back, mainly from bridge owners. Inevitably this had to take a backward look, to gauge experiences with different materials and techniques, whether good, bad, or indifferent. The intention was to learn lessons to incorporate into the guide. It was fully recognised that some repair materials had evolved over the period of time, but it is clearly difficult to assess the performance in service and durability of such materials, until some time had elapsed. To balance this approach, some of the latest research into concrete repair materials was assessed and is referred to in the report. In particular in work at Sheffield Hallam University, considering the importance of 'matching' the properties of the concrete substrate and those of the repair material, in an area that the whole of the repair industry will need to consider in the future. So also with the development of the European Standards for concrete repair.

I am wholly in agreement with the sentiments expressed in the article of the need to ensure that experienced contractors and trained and qualified operatives are used. Employers clearly have a role in this, but it is also the responsibility of the whole of the repair industry to ensure that quality is achieved. Perhaps on reflection the guide could have made a stronger reference to these key aspects, but this was not the prime purpose, as it concentrated on more practical and technical aspects of repair. The article has also remarked on the concrete repair specification included in BD27/86. As stated in this somewhat dated, though newer improved versions have been used on more recent contracts, and within Term Contract arrangements through the Highways Agency's Maintenance Agent arrangements. Clearly there is a need to update the specification to achieve a consistent generic document that can be applied nationally, but with sufficient flexibility to deal with the many and varied concrete repair applications, and to align with the principles enshrined within the European Standards, and current best practice in terms of materials and methods. This is a significant aim, and realistically cannot be achieved quickly, particularly as it will be important to work with the repair industry (trade associations, specialist contractors and material suppliers) to ensure its relevance and suitability. Returning to the Practical Guide, I understand that the Concrete Repair Association was provided with a virtually final draft of the document for comment, by TRL, and some comments were received from Mike Haynes and considered by the authors and the working group. I look forward to working with the Concrete Repair Association in the future, with forthcoming developments in standards and specifications. Incidentally, the guide is available from TRL Publications Unit (tel: 01344 770783) priced £55.00 (reference Application Guide AG43).

## KATY JOINS CRA EXECUTIVE

Katy Lomax of specialist contractors **Brookes** has been elected the first female member of the Concrete Repair Association Executive Committee. Although relatively new to the industry, Katy has quickly become an active participant in the business of the CRA.



Katy joined Brookes two years ago having previously worked in the PR department of Enron Europe Limited and having completed a BA in Management Studies at Leeds Metropolitan University. She is currently Brookes' Business Development Manager. Brookes are specialist contractors in the external refurbishment of both civil structures and buildings. Core activities include concrete survey, investigation and repair; design, installation and monitoring of a range of electrochemical systems; application of high performance coating systems, installation of composite/traditional methods of structural strengthening, liquid roofing systems and waterproof membranes, bridge bearings and edge barrier/parapets. For more information contact Katy on 0845 6018319.

ENQUIRY NO: 1105

## LUCKY 13 FOR FLEXCRETE EGGINGTON BRIDGE PROJECT

Refurbishment work carried out on Eggington Bridge in Derbyshire 13 years ago has passed a recent inspection with flying colours. The bridge, which carries the A38 trunk road over the River Dove, was showing signs of distress to the support structure due to carbonation exacerbated by chloride and water



ingress. Following extensive repairs, **Flexcrete** Cementitious Coating 851 was applied to the structure to prevent further carbonation of the concrete and corrosion of the reinforcement. Tests conducted by engineering consultants Mott MacDonald Ltd in January 2003 revealed that the coating continues to provide an effective barrier to carbon dioxide as well as chloride ion ingress. For further details telephone 01772 255074 or email info@flexcrete.co.uk

ENQUIRY NO: 1106

## GUNITE EXTENDS BBA APPROVAL

**Gunite (Eastern) Ltd** has announced that the company has extended the scope of its existing British Board of Agreement Approved Installer Certificate to include all four of the concrete repair systems that carry full BBA Approval.

The company is now the only installer approved by the BBA for all four of the leading product manufacturers - Flexcrete Ltd, Fosroc Ltd, Saint-Gobain Weber SBD and Sika Ltd. The addition of Flexcrete and Sika materials completes the company's product portfolio and confirms its status as a leading player in the concrete repair and external building refurbishment market.

Contact Graham Williamson at Gunite (Eastern) Ltd for more details of the company's services - telephone 01480 466880

ENQUIRY NO: 1107



## NEW CORROSION INHIBITOR REDUCES CORROSION OF STEEL REBARS BY UP TO 99%

30 years after their first patent concerning the use of silanes to protect reinforced concrete, **Degussa Construction**



Chemicals, trading as MBT Feb in the UK, have launched Protectosil® CIT, a next-generation, functionally modified silane based corrosion inhibitor which dramatically reduces the corrosion rates of steel reinforcements in concrete structures.

Protectosil® CIT is a single-component, ready-to-use, clear liquid, which is sprayed directly onto the surface of steel-reinforced concrete structures with no change in appearance of the surface. It chemically bonds to steel, cement paste and other siliceous material within the concrete so preventing wash-out or leaching of the material, ensuring a minimum effective life of at least 10 and probably 15 years.

For further information, contact: The Marketing Department, MBT Feb, Albany House, Swinton Hall Road, Swinton, Manchester, M27 4DT, Tel. 0161 794 7411, www.mbtfeb.co.uk

ENQUIRY NO: 1110



## BIRMINGHAM CITY LABORATORIES TESTING, INVESTIGATION & CONSULTANCY

**Birmingham City Laboratories** are able to carry out a wide range of specialist independent tests, surveys and in-house analysis.

Some of our services include:

- Investigation of Structures & Bridges.
- Surveys of Traditional & Non-Traditional Construction.
- Concrete Condition Surveys.
- Chemical Analysis.
- Material Defects & Failures.
- Assessment of Fire Damage.
- Determination of Constructional Details.
- Industrial Rope Access.
- Confined Space Working.
- Asbestos Surveys.

For an information pack or for general enquires please contact Trevor Box on 0121 303 9300 or trevor\_box@birmingham.gov.uk



ENQUIRY NO: 1111

## STRUCTURAL INTEGRITY ENSURED AT CAA HOUSE

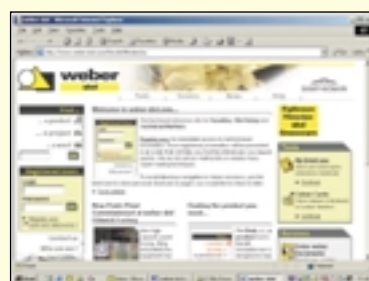
Designed by Richard Seifert in the mid 1960's, CAA House, home of the Civil Aviation Authority, is a fine example of the period's concrete frame and panel construction methods. The 16 storey circular tower in London's Kingsway has recently undergone a comprehensive exterior survey and structural repairs by specialist contractor, **Quadruga Concepts Ltd**. Following a full survey, undertaken from access cradles, to determine the condition of the concrete frame, external cladding units and the mastic joints between the two, Quadruga carried out the necessary remedial works. Using epoxy plus mortar and polysulphide sealant, Quadruga secured all the pre-cast panels, replaced any defective mastic joints and repaired the concrete frame where required. For more details contact Eleanor Ford, telephone 01606 330888



ENQUIRY NO: 1108

## NEW TECHNICAL RESOURCE

**weber sbd** has just launched a new, updated and dynamic web site. Designed as an information portal, it offers specifiers, applicators, distributors, stockist and clients immediate access to extensive, up to date information regarding the company's product portfolio. All features and benefits, uses and constraints of the product portfolio can be readily browsed. Once 'logged in', the registered user is immediately presented with a profiled presentation and full technical information on the section of the portfolio applicable to them. The site features a range of search options to guide visitors through the large portfolio. A project gallery shows what can be achieved, a full contact database and (via product data sheet pages) materials safety data sheets for immediate download. Whatever your interest in the construction industry, www.weber-sbd.com is expanding daily to provide a real resource of reference material and professional advice.



ENQUIRY NO: 1109

## REPEX - NEWLY APPOINTED TRIFLEX APPLICATOR

Newly appointed Triflex applicator, **Repex Ltd**, recently used the BFS system on a project for the London Borough of Redbridge at Aragon Court, Hainault. The system, which is non-slip, waterproof and resistant to chloride and CO<sub>2</sub> ingress, was used to coat public and private balconies following concrete patch repairs. The Triflex system is the latest in a growing number of specialist products being used by Repex under the tutelage of manufacturers. With an increasing number of in-house and sub contract trades at its disposal, Repex Ltd is more able to provide the complete external refurbishment service required by its clients.

For further information contact William Drinkwater  
Telephone 01435 866666.  
Email: repex@repex.co.uk  
Web Site: www.repex.co.uk

ENQUIRY NO: 1112





# CRISIS! CONCRETE!



Incredible, isn't it? This amazing image, illustrating how some people appear to cope with damaged concrete is unbelievable - in the truest sense of the word! We don't believe (and hope) that there can be too many other examples of such poor practice, but this picture has prompted us to ask if any of our readers have any shots showing similarly laughable instances - simply out of interest of course!

If you have any such improbable illustrations that you would like to contribute, send them to the Editor, Cracking Matters, Association House, 99 West Street, Farnham, Hants GU9 7EN, or email as a high resolution JPEG file to [initialcontacts@bigfoot.com](mailto:initialcontacts@bigfoot.com). If sufficient are received, we plan to introduce a regular Cracking Matters feature called, of course, 'Crisis Concrete!'.

# CRA EMBRACES CSCS



Picture by kind permission of CRA member, Concrete Repairs Ltd.

How often have we heard it? When business is good companies will say that they are too busy to train people. There is so much work, they simply do not have time for staff training. It's all hands to the pumps! But what happens when the boot's on the other foot? During recession, companies say, there is too little spare cash to spend on training. Work is extremely difficult to win, prices are very competitive and low margins will simply not allow any expenditure on training.

So what does all this add up to? The answer usually is a serious decline in

new training and precious little refresher education for existing staff. The situation prevails throughout the construction and most other industries. During the last recession, it was estimated that the lack of training investment resulted in the loss of around 150,000 tradesmen and professionals from the construction industry.

Acceptance of the fact that the concrete repair industry's greatest asset is its highly skilled operatives, has encouraged the

CRA to whole-heartedly adopt the Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS). The Association believes that structured training is a fundamental requirement in ensuring continually improving standards of workmanship in the industry and to endorse this, CRA members have 'put their money where their mouth is'.

Recent figures show that CRA Members currently employ 557 CSCS registered concrete repair operatives with another 149 currently in the throes of registration. In addition, 17 operatives have attained NVQ level 2 and another 9 are progressing through the NVQ process.

The CRA was expressly formed to provide the construction industry with access to companies able to provide competent, long-term and value for money solutions to concrete problems. Full CRA specialist contractor and material manufacturer members are required to operate to the highest standards of quality, safety and reliability.

In addition to the CSCS training initiative, members must also be Q.A. accredited to BS EN ISO 9000, comply with the CRA Code of Practice, possess an established track record, financial status and business integrity.

## Efficient CHIPS!

(Continued from Page 1)

labels and will also be available in the form of material safety data sheets. This will enable the specifier/designer, contractor and/or end user to carry out a risk assessment on the use of the materials. It will also assist with the correct selection of material at the design stage, correct handling and storage on site, any environmental issues to be considered, any enclosures planned for, any Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) measures for users and the correct usage of the material on the project.

At a simple level, CHIP 3 will provide you with information that tells you if the material is harmful, how easily the material will catch fire, any health effects, any dangers to the environment and how to safely dispose of the packaging. In addition to supplying the information on the label and the material safety data sheet, reputable manufacturers will also provide this information in their product catalogues and on their website for easy downloading.

For the supplier, the basic requirement of CHIP 3 is to decide whether the specialist product is hazardous and to correctly label it. The packaging labels will tell you how to decide what kind of hazard the chemical has and explain the hazard by a simple sentence that describes it, i.e. a risk phrase or R-phrase.

The onus is on the supplier to correctly label the product. The risk phrase is for the end user to assess the hazard and carry out the risk assessment for the use of the material. There are 19 symbols, 68 phrases and 64 safety phrases that can be used to identify the risk.

Further information can be found on the Health & Safety Executive website at <http://www.hse.gov.uk/chip> - go to phrases.

# Downsizing and all that...

On the odd occasion, over recent months, when broadcasters have found room for anything other than the war in Iraq, you may have noticed a piece (slipped under the wire) expressing concern regarding the continuing skill shortage in British industry as a whole and in the construction industry in general.

The report was tied in with a prediction that the economy (you remember the economy, its what the news used to be about) was not going to grow as strongly as forecast. One of the interesting things that came to light, once you read a little deeper, was not just the shortfall of new entrants into the construction industry, which lets face it we've known about for years, but what was happening to people with twenty plus years of experience.

Increasingly there's a tendency for what is popularly called "downsizing" where you cash in on your property equity, move somewhere smaller and enjoy a stress free lifestyle

concentrating on the quality of life. In fact in the EU, some 12 million people have done just that. That's 10% of the workforce, give or take a few. These figures do not include people taking

early retirement, leaving work due to long-term illness, or adopting what the statisticians call 'alternative lifestyles' - what my generation called 'dropping out'. Apparently, of this 12 million, some 30% come from the construction sector. That's 3,600,000 people!



Does this matter? I would argue that it does. Any resource that is lost is very difficult to replace. If the industry starts to lose its experienced personnel at a serious rate, then according to just about every statistic going the future is going to be extremely bleak.

So what is the solution? Well I think that there are several things that can be done on different levels. On a national level, the industry has to try and get Government to understand that there is a place in society for all sorts of skill and aptitude levels. Talk to most

school age children and they regard work as sitting behind a computer keyboard as being all and end all. They make little connection between their efforts and the outside world. With a teaching profession that has largely only ever been involved in academic work, this is hardly surprising. Let me make it quite clear, however, that I do not believe this is the fault of that profession. We need to educate the educators into the needs of our society, or we will pay the price.

Secondly, we have to start treating employees as the valuable resource that they really are. For the past ten years or so, work in the construction business has not been particularly difficult to find, but that period is coming to an end. It will take all the experience and knowledge on hand to survive in the next few years and anyone who thinks that they can rest on their laurels is in that state of denial much beloved of certain afternoon television shows.

Finally, we need to stop people leaving the industry because for some, there is still time. Why for some? Well, because I have now increased the above figure to 3,600,001. For me its time for a change!

'CRACKING MATTERS' is published by the Concrete Repair Association (CRA), Association House, 99 West Street, Farnham, Surrey GU9 7EN. Tel: (01252) 739145 Fax: (01252) 739140 Email: [info@associationhouse.org.uk](mailto:info@associationhouse.org.uk) Website: [www.concretere.com](http://www.concretere.com)

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