



**For Immediate Release
NEOCON 2005 Booth #8-1102**

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Power of Armstrong Commercial Portfolio Helps Designers Create the Experience

CHICAGO, IL, June 13, 2005 – “Commercial designers are not just focused and driven by trends. They are more concerned with creating the right environment – the experience for those who will be in those spaces,” says Armstrong Product Design Manager, Paul Pearce, who will provide a guided mini-tour of the breadth of Armstrong Commercial Flooring on display at NEOCON Booth 8-1102, with one tour each day from 11 to 11:15 a.m., June 13-15.

Under the theme, “Elements of Nature,” the Armstrong booth emphasizes natural combinations of colors in different design interpretations, with each area of the floor representing different elements: earth, fire, wood and water. The theme expresses connectivity of color and design as well as care for the environment.

Armstrong’s commercial portfolio helps designers create the experience for retail, healthcare, education, and hospitality, institutional and governmental spaces. “For example, for healthcare, the motivation might be to create a ‘healing’ environment; for education it’s a ‘learning’ environment; and for retail it’s a ‘buying’ environment. It’s about enhancing customer relationships and creating an experience so customers want to come back,” Pearce says.

The portfolio spans a newly expanded range of Armstrong® commercial hardwood flooring and a wide selection of low-maintenance resilient floors, including luxury vinyl and tile, luxury vinyl tile, vinyl composition tile and earth-friendly linoleum.

Solutions for Competing Goals

Designers often deal with competing design goals and must balance them against budget constraints. This is where the power of the portfolio comes in, says Pearce.

“By offering a range of wood flooring, for example, at different price points, color and graining, if an architect or designer can’t afford real wood, they can move into luxury vinyl tile with two visuals from our nature-inspired NATURAL OPTIONS™ or the NATURAL CREATIONS™ Woods Collection. We also offer wood options in vinyl sheet for a seamless look. We put forward the right floor, for the right space, with consideration to design, performance, installation and budget.”

“Lots of spaces may be similar, but every space solution is unique.”

Paul A. Peace, Manager, Design Development

“We want to cover the whole wood category from top to bottom, so whatever the application or price point, we can satisfy it. Architects, designers, specifiers want to go to a supplier to get the solution that they want –and a wide range of structures can solve a wide range of design challenges,” adds Armstrong Staff Designer Laura Gemperline.

Pearce explains the Armstrong design team talks directly to more than 200 specifiers a year to better understand what designers want to create within each environment.

“Designers are concerned about finding the right flooring materials that provides the look to meet their customers’ needs,” he says.

Natural looks and textures continue to be a driving force, he says, which emanates from appreciation for the environment. It influences the selection of flooring, taking into consideration the appropriate use of materials, natural or recycled content, low maintenance and durability.

Hard-Surface Shift

From conversations with designers, Pearce notes a shift in attitude that is more open to hard surface floors in what were traditionally carpeted areas, primarily due to maintenance and health concerns. “That’s particularly true in healthcare and hospitality settings because of the allergens and dust that can get trapped in carpets,” he says. “There are more areas where designers are comfortable using either carpet or resilient flooring now, instead of just a few specific spaces.”

Lasting Impressions

Pearce points out that with the exception of retail, most commercial interiors are intended to last more than a decade. “There’s an inherent dichotomy that sometimes the designer may *want* some ‘wow’ or impact, but knows what the client would accept. We need to have colors and visuals that provide impact, but offer the right colors that they can use. ...The bulk of what people select is not the brighter ‘wow’ colors, but what gives great design solutions for the long term.”

“Sometimes you have to balance the ‘wow’ factor with the pragmatic.”

Paul A. Peace, Manager, Design Development

In retail, designs may change as often as every three to five years, so designers do want and use the ‘wow’ factor. In medical facilities, brighter colors are also in demand for pediatrics and specialty applications like way finding, so Armstrong recently updated its MEDINTECH line with a range of seven ‘brighter, yet subdued’, accent colors.

Experience – Natural and Warm

Much of Armstrong’s commercial portfolio is centered on natural hardwood and coordinating with wood tones because wood and wood finishes figure so highly in many design environments, especially retail, health care and hospitality. Texture is also increasing in importance hardwood flooring. That’s why Armstrong is moving hand-scraped, distressed and rustic hardwood planks into the commercial collection, all having proven popular in residential lines. This is at a time when the residential and commercial sectors have a high degree of overlap or connectivity. Textured and warm colored woods can help anchor the natural, “home and hearth,” and “come back again” experiences that designers often are striving to achieve.

Market-Focused Palettes

Gemperline notes, “There’s security behind the Armstrong brand, demonstrated by breadth of product and knowledge that the palette is both inter-connected and segment (customer) focused.”

Armstrong is adding more than 100 different choices in hardwood flooring this year across a range of styles, species, and light, medium and dark tonal finishes. In resilient flooring, Armstrong offers a palette of over 140 choices in Vinyl Composition Tile (70 in Imperial alone!), 84 in Luxury Vinyl Tile, 89 colors in Linoleum and 81 Wood options. The vinyl sheet palette, although more focused, has 198 color options and all are augmented by specialty flooring and wall base in over 70 colors.

[Editors: See sidebar next page.]

Sidebar

Armstrong Product Design Manager Paul A. Pearce Talks About Color Palettes

Education – “With education you need lots of neutrals that all interconnect, either mid-tones or accent colors, and those may often relate to a particular school or university color.”

Retail – “You need a range of good, clean neutrals and connecting ranges of accents that can be used where appropriate. With the neutrals, you need colors based around wood. Wood may be the predominant finish, but you often need other products such as VCT [vinyl composition tile] or linoleum in colors that coordinate with wood and wood finishes.”

Healthcare – “Colors need to coordinate with natural wood finishes that are widely used, especially in patient areas. “Healthcare is about having a ‘healing palette,’ which means you need light, medium and dark tones in neutrals, balanced with a full spectrum of both muted and accent colors. You need a range that covers the spectrum from the yellows through to the greens.”

Pearce notes that the healthcare palette should also be seen to include other segments.

“Healthcare covers a multiplicity of spaces and needs. Retail spaces, coffee shops and food, rest and lounge areas, teaching facilities, administration and executive offices, public and staff areas are all parts of the total complex. Starbucks is even making its way from the high street into the hospital. We see what we do as not just meeting the needs of patient, medical and staff areas, but to provide solutions that can cover across a major facility or campus.”

Armstrong World Industries

Armstrong World Industries, Inc., is a global leader in the design and manufacturer of floors, ceilings and cabinets. In 2004, Armstrong’s net sales totaled more than \$3 billion. Based in Lancaster, PA, Armstrong has 42 plants in 12 countries and approximately 15,000 employees worldwide. Armstrong Floor Products and its powerhouse family of brands – Armstrong®, Bruce® Hardwood Floors, Armstrong™ Flooring by Hartco®, Robbins® Fine Hardwood Flooring, Desso® Textile Floorcoverings and Desso DLW Sports Systems – offer the most extensive portfolio of flooring products available, including branded vinyl, laminate, linoleum, hardwoods, carpet ceramics and sports surfaces for residential and commercial applications. More information about Armstrong is available on the Internet at www.armstrong.com or by calling 1-877-ARMSTRONG.

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