BUILDING STANDARDS

New paving slab standards developed

A new South African Bureau of Standards (SABS) directive for paving slabs will be released in January 2010. The current standards governing paving slabs in South Africa will be altered to ensure that the stones in paving slabs are not only strong, but abrasion resistant as well.

According to director of Pan Mixers, Robert Ebeling, its clients will be ready to meet the challenges imposed by the new standards. "In the past, paving has sometimes failed – not because of the paving stone strength, but because the abrasion resistance of the pavers was not adequate. The new standards will see an increase in the abrasion requirement to overcome this," says Ebeling. Pavers need to have both a high breaking strength and a high abrasion resistance factor. "This means that two different types of concrete will be required in the manufacturing process. The base concrete must be extremely strong, while the topping concrete must stand up to intense and ongoing abrasion," Ebeling explains.

To enable its clients to test the abrasion resistance of their paving slabs, Pan Mixers is currently manufacturing an abrasion testing machine that was developed by the Concrete Masonry Association. "The machine comprises a drum, into which ball bearings are placed. Pavers are then bolted to the walls of the drum. When the drum spins, the bearings hit the pavers, simulating abrasion. After a specified number of revolutions, the pavers are weighed and measured against their weight before the spinning. If the weight loss falls within certain parameters, the pavers will be considered abrasion resistant." Ebeling believes that having the company's own abrasion testing equipment will enable its clients to keep within the specifications laid down by the SABS. "This is good news all round," says Ebeling. "The industry has been pushing for higher standards for many years. The problem was that without an abrasion test, the pavers would meet specifications, but they certainly were not tough enough and they abraded."