

# 'With time and cost saved, drywall construction is a profitable option'

The traditional masonry construction approach is steadily changing and the advent of gypsum based drywalls is likely to change the way hotels are built in the near future.

**Venkat Subramanian, MD, Saint-Gobain Gyproc India**, elaborates on the cost and time effectiveness of drywall construction systems to **Rajesh Rodrigues**



**Q** How are your products beneficial to the hospitality industry?

**A** We are in the construction business for a long time. Our products are gypsum-based, a soft mineral consisting of calcium sulphate dihydrate. These natural available minerals are converted into plasterboards or plasters and are eight to ten times lighter than traditional masonry systems and three to four times faster to install. From a hotel developer's perspective, the use of drywall construction aids to erect the hotel structure faster than the

conventional approach. Though our products are 25 per cent more expensive than masonry systems (per sq ft) with time being saved, it will still be a profitable option for hoteliers.

**Q** What are the advantages and disadvantages of gypsum drywall construction?

**A** Firstly, if one considers constructing a very high rise building, there is a choice of going in for a lighter material for the non-load bearing walls through the drywall construction. Thus the dead weight of the building will be significantly lower and also the structural costs. There is no need to cure gypsum drywalls as it is time consuming and requires lot of water. Since this whole process is non-messy, parallel activity like plumbing, electrical and carpeting in the building can take place simultaneously. The other advantage is the aesthetic appeal in the finish of the wall, paint and wallpaper both can be applied on drywalls. However, drywalls cannot be used on the exterior wall which is exposed to the atmosphere directly specially during heavy rains but in some hotels we have installed drywalls (in guest bathrooms) after special treatment.

**Q** How convenient is it to refurbish a room which has drywalls as compared to brick and mortar rooms?

**A** Drywall construction is well suited for hotels planning for refurbishment. Brick and mortar changes in terms of plumbing and electrical work are time consuming and the room remains inaccessible for days. It requires chiselling and lot of dust spreads around. But with drywalls, only a small part needs to be cut out at one end and through a pipe wires can be drawn in and that part of the wall can be replaced by same size of the drywall. Working on drywalls is three to four times faster, dust free and does not require shifting of furniture and other equipment out of the room. The other advantage of drywalls is that the room size can also be changed according to the needs of the hotel far more easily.

**Q** How safe are drywalls in case of an earthquake or fire? Also elaborate on the acoustics and the aesthetic factors associated with drywalls?

**A** Since drywalls are light, the load is far lesser thus it is safer in an event like earthquake. As far as fire is concerned, it is possible to design the material as per the requirement for a two to four hour fire proof rating. This treatment of the material can prevent fire from spreading. As far as acoustics is concerned, it absorbs sound from the neighbouring room and does not transmit it to another room. Here again it can be designed

for different levels of absorption depending on its location i.e. guest room or public areas. In fact all the above results can be achieved with relatively thinner drywalls than brick and mortar systems.

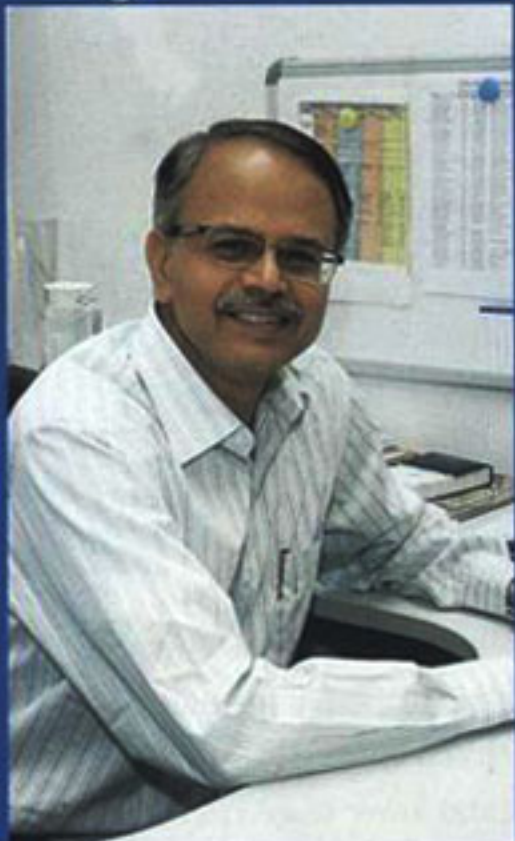
**Q** Are your products eco friendly?

**A** Right from the time of manufacture all the products are eco friendly. The raw material itself is naturally available product and even if there is any waste, it is sent back to the company; the product is 100 per cent recyclable and is converted back into a gypsum board. We consume lesser energy to produce these products. If our products are used, due to the insulation, lesser energy is used for air conditioning. Overall, not only in terms of our production but also in terms of our usage, we are environmentally friendly.

**Q** Given the fact that drywalls are beneficial in terms of cost, safety and time, what has been the Indian market's response towards this concept?

**A** We are a new entrant in the Indian hospitality industry. Hoteliers, especially from abroad, who are well versed with our products, are using them at their properties. Now, they are recommending us to their Indian partners as they are very particular of their standards. Any new concept takes its own time to be accepted. ■

## Q&A with



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