

ZEAGER NEWS

The compaction factor

How important is it to know what compaction means in the wood fiber industry? If you're an accountant and you don't know the tax code, you may be in trouble. If you're a mechanic and you're not sure the difference between a box wrench and a torque wrench you may want to find another career. So is knowing what natural compaction versus mechanical compaction is for engineered wood fiber (EWF) and how that is going to effect the newly adopted ADA guidelines coming in March 2012.



25-35% natural compaction is what we've all been accustomed to hearing. That % being the amount that EWF typically will compact over a 2-6 week period during normal use and normal rainfall. Unlike a product such as concrete, EWF is loaded and installed in a "fluffy" state so as the product is trampled on and rained on it knits together and compacts forming a firm and stable surface. But what if my customer wants a firm and stable surface without waiting for this knitting and compacting process to happen? Typically playground owners may take their chances and hope that there won't be a complaint from an angry parent that watched as their child with a disability couldn't maneuver over the fresh EWF just installed yesterday without being leveled, wetted and compacted. But when the newly adopted ADA guidelines start to be enforced by the DOJ next year, owners may ask you to install it per the recommended instructions from the wood fiber manufacturer.



Zeager's recommendations are to install the wood fiber in lifts. Six inches loose, then wet and compact with a mechanical compactor. Repeat the steps until you reach the desired final thickness. This will require more wood fiber; typically about 15% more than the 25-35% more that is calculated for natural compaction but, when you leave the playground, you will be ADA compliant. These steps hasten the

process of knitting the wood fibers together to form a firm, stable surface that is still the best impact surface in the industry pound for pound.

So remember, before just spreading the wood fiber and running over it with your front-end loader and hoping for the best, take the time to install the surfacing properly along with installing wear mats under those high traffic areas and you will minimize the likelihood of complaints while minimizing your customer's maintenance bills.

Go to this link for installation instructions on Zeager Woodcarpet engineered wood fiber : <http://www.zeager.com/playgrounds/info%20links/system%201.pdf>