



METROFLOR HOSTS FACTORY TOUR OF ITS CHINESE MANUFACTURING FACILITIES

- *Staff, Distributors Get Behind-the-scenes Look at Factories* -

NORWALK, CT – Metroflor hosted distributor customers for an exclusive tour of the company's Chinese manufacturing facilities in Zhangjiagang, China, March 25 – 26, prior to Domotex Asia/ChinaFloor. The two-day excursion provided unprecedented, behind-the-scenes exposure to the world's most advanced LVT factories along with a firsthand preview of Metroflor's latest product innovations. The willingness to open their flooring suppliers' factory doors in China is a reflection of the organization's commitment to transparency by showing their business partnership firsthand: a collaboration of elite manufacturing operations and new product development.

Starting in Shanghai, the group traveled 140 km/87 miles by private coach to Zhangjiagang, a port city along the banks of the Yantze River, where the facilities are clustered within this major industrial zone. The tour began with a visit to Shanghai Da Decorative Film Co., Ltd. (known as TCP), the world's newest, largest and most sophisticated resilient flooring printing facility. With its 300 employees and 710,418 sq. ft./ 66,000 sq. m., TCP has made a major commitment to expansion and supporting the Metroflor business with this new facility. TCP prints the decorative film for Metroflor's vast assortment of LVT floors, which are then transported to two other manufacturing partners' facilities to be integrated into the final product: Elegant Home-Tech Co., Ltd., and Yihua Rundong New Material Co., Ltd. (known as Yihua).

At Elegant Home-Tech, the group explored the 1,183,600 sq. ft./110,000 sq. m. facility, which employs 1200 people and has been doing business with Metroflor for 27 years. Elegant Home-Tech produces a wide range of products for Metroflor brands including Engage Genesis, Engage Inception, Metroflor LVT including the new Déjà New with Attraxion Magnetic Attachment Technology, and Engage, Konecto, Artistek and Vercade Wall Fashion.

The group observed extrusion lines for the ISOCORE rigid core and the calendaring of the PVC wear layers as they were rolled out in large sheets to set the gauge. While there, they discovered the emerging technology for creating new formats of patterned floors including chevrons and basket weaves. New, high-speed CNC routing capability has the capacity to create distinctive shapes for flooring beyond the traditional rectangular/square plank and tile formats, such as octagons and hexagons, which Metroflor will be implementing into new products. Robotic technology is being integrated to improve efficiencies in the manufacturing process, and the group saw demonstrations of the robotic automation as it was being installed.

Said Russ Rogg, President and CEO of Metroflor Corporation, "Whenever possible, we attempt to convey the scale, efficiency and innovative spirit of our factories through videos, pictures and descriptions...but there is no substitute for experiencing it firsthand as this tour allowed. We are very proud of our factory partners and the products that we manufacture in collaboration with them, and we were thrilled to share this experience with our distributor partners."

The second facility toured was Yihua, with 2,200 Employees and 2,346,000 sq. ft./218,000 sq. m. A partner with Halstead/Metroflor for 30 years, Yihua also manufactures a wide array of Metroflor products in the Engage Genesis and Engage Essentials product lines. Visitors watched the manufacture of the solid vinyl backing layers which go into the hot press facility, where the construction of the LVT is built. After hot press, the material goes to the coating line to receive either ceramic bead, FX2, or FX3 Surface Protectant, depending upon the product. Following the coating line, the material returns to a long conveyor-like oven followed by the annealing process of a cool bath to ensure dimensional stability. From profiling to packaging into cartons, the group was again impressed by the consistent level of automation and precision in the manufacturing process.

A product showcase gave a “sneak peek” into innovative new product visuals.

- Fashion House featuring Engage Genesis showcases some of the category’s most unique formats for a collection of products focused on design including chevrons, basket weaves, herringbones, and square tiles that can be installed corner-to-corner, a first for a floating tile.
- Metroflor LVT with Attraxion Magnetic Technology was on display with the inclusion of CNC-routed shapes that incorporate the Attraxion two-part installation system.
- Engage Inception featured new designs in the 120 and 200 series including new In-Register Embossed designs in Engage Inception 200.
- Engage Genesis was also on display with striking new visuals in the popular 2000XL series with accent bevels.
- New designs in the Engage 2000 portfolio were shown that coordinate with the designs in the basket-weave products in Fashion House but stand alone on their own merits as well.

Said Robert Langstaff, Metroflor’s director of design, “With this visit, I see design opportunities to raise the LVT product to an even more authentic look. The possibilities for advancement seem endless thanks to the innovation and forward thinking of our manufacturing partners.”

Hospitality was also on display in Zhangjiagang, with a welcome reception for the group the first evening and a banquet celebration featuring - in traditional Metroflor fashion - rock and roll music, followed by fireworks and a videocam with Group CEO Harlan Stone from Connecticut, who was unable to attend the tour.

Said Carl Embry of Apollo Distributing during an interview with Kemp Karr of Floor Daily, who attended the tour, “It was cleaner than any factory I’ve ever seen. It seemed very efficient. The capacity, the cleanliness of the operation and the quality control redundancy, and the hand’s on approach of the people at that factory were all impressive.”

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PRESS CONTACT:
Susan Bang PR
sbang@susanbang.com
917-991-9714

AT METROFLOR:
Gary Keeble, Director of Marketing
gkeeble@metroflorcorp.com
888-235-6672 ext. 3820