

CONSTRUCTION

With fake materials, your house may not last

How to spot fake building materials

BY UMAR NSUBUGA

When a building collapses, as they have in Kampala in the past, fingers are immediately

pointed at counterfeit construction materials, poor plans and shoddy workmanship.

David Kireli, a civil engineer at the education ministry, believes counterfeit construction materials have flooded the market.

Abdu-Wahab Nyanzi, an architect, agrees. He says there are a number of counterfeit structural and roofing materials on the local market that are cheaper than the genuine products. Most of the substandard materials are believed to originate from Asian countries.

With the quality of building



Experts say good quality iron sheets must have 122g of zinc coating per square metre

material in question, anyone intending to put up a home would do well to pay close attention to the materials they purchase. But if you are a layperson, how can you tell that what you are about to buy or what you have bought is not the real deal?

It is a tall order, but experts

say there are some telltale signs that could help.

Roofing sheets
Counterfeit iron sheets are usually manufactured with little or no zinc coating. Nyanzi says quality iron sheets should have 122g per square metre of zinc coating. The coating protects the roofing materials from rusting. "Counterfeit roofing materials will usually rust in less than two years," he says.

According to Nyanzi, counterfeit roofing sheets are usually cheaper than the genuine sheets. Huge discounts could be a sign that the materials are not genuine. "One should look out for the Uganda National Bureau of Standards (UNBS) logo and the manufacturer's name or trademark before buying the sheets," he says.

Nyanzi says sometimes the fake iron sheets appear wider than the genuine ones and people are lured into buying them since they seem to offer more value for money. Stay safe; stick with standard sizes.

Nyanzi says you should avoid buying roofing sheets that have more than 11 corrugations (long narrow shallow depressions) over a metre's width as more corrugations compromise the strength of the sheets.

In case you are not sure of the quality of the iron sheets you intend to purchase, Nyanzi advises that you take a sample to the UNBS for testing. It might seem like a lot of trouble, but when it comes to putting up a building, you are better safe than sorry.

Accessories

There are a number of metal roofing accessories such as gutters, ridges and valleys



Poor or compromised quality of construction materials may result in one's house collapsing

3 CONSTRUCTION TIPS

1 Take your time: You might not have all the resources you need to put up your building as fast as you would like. The temptation to compromise on quality in order to save some money will be high. Resist it. Put up your building slowly, but surely.

2 Bring in an expert. The safety of your building is so important a matter that you cannot afford to follow the crowd or untested advice from well-meaning friends. Get a skilled and honest professional who will tell you what you need to hear, not what you would like to hear. It will be more expensive, but redoing your building later when cracks develop will be even more expensive.

3 Talk to others: Join fora and read literature where other people share their experiences. You might pick up a cautionary tale or two and avoid making some mistakes others made.

essential to the installation of a metal roof. Usually, these have standard sizes that work well with the structure of the roof.

Counterfeit roofing accessories are usually of low quality and are smaller. It is important to hire an expert who understands what your architect has recommended.

There are also quite a number of fake roofing nail suppliers on the market. According to Richard Sefuma, a foreman with a construction company in Kampala, counterfeit roofing nails are difficult to differentiate from the genuine ones.

He says one can only tell

that the nails are counterfeit when driving them into the roof. He recommends that you buy your roofing nails directly from manufacturers or authorised dealers.

Knowledge gaps

According to Nyanzi, the competition in the market and little knowledge in the sector is leading to the poor mixing of building materials, and this can cause cracks in the walls, beams, slabs among others, and may lead to the collapsing of buildings.

In addition, with the high prices of building materials, builders are faced with a dilemma of procuring quality materials and end up using what is available to them.

A lapse in monitoring
Martin Luzida, who owns a construction company, says the biggest challenge is the growing quantities of imported building materials brought in by the large hardware shops.

"The businessmen bring in substandard products and this is threatening Uganda's construction industry," he says. According to Luzida, the biggest problem is that there is insufficient monitoring of the products coming into the market.

In its defence, the UNBS says they have put enough measures in place to rid Uganda of substandard building materials, especially cement. However, the reality is that with Uganda's overdependence on imports, lack of local skills and equipment, low production capacity in the country and poor buyers' knowledge, low quality building products are being sold and used, leaving many buildings and their occupants vulnerable to disaster.

25 YEARS
bpc NEPTUNE PAINTS
DECORATIVE, INDUSTRIAL, AUTOMOTIVE AND ROAD MARKING PAINTS, PRIMERS, THINNERS, KRACK FILLERS ETC.
Colour up your Life with LUXOR Paints
LUXOR
Premium Quality Paints
TEXTURED, WEATHER GUARD, SILK VINYL, ACRYLIC MATT, PLASTER PRIMER & SUPER GLOSS
FULLY GUARANTEED
MANUFACTURERS:
BPC CHEMICALS LTD.
WORKS: Plot No. M264, Ntinda Industrial Area, Near Britania/Gentex, Kampala, Uganda.
Tel: (+256) 041 4932591 / 039 2177091, Mob: 0716 514655 / 0772 789 003
Email: bpcchemicals@vsnl.com
OFFICE: Plot No. 108, 6th Street, "KIBAO" Next to City Times, P.O. Box 10268, Kampala, Uganda. Tel: (+256) 041 4342971 / 039 3260333
Email: kpbpc@visionline.co.ug. Web: www.bpcuganda.com

EXPERT ADVICE
Abdu-Wahab

Nyanzi says there are a number of counterfeit structural and roofing materials on the local market that are cheaper than the genuine products. Most of the substandard materials are believed to originate from Asian countries.