

# Getting bigger and lighter

The historic Italian producer of fibreglass laminates is working rapidly to expand its site, with the aim of increasing production capacity and quality in general, but is at the same time launching a new range of lightweight laminates on the market, which will save on weight for motorhome makers.

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Simone Colombarini  
Vetroresina SpA CEO



**T**here's news on several fronts at Vetroresina S.p.A. HQ: after earning recognition from manufacturers for the excellent work carried out in recent years, the Ferrara-based company is now seeking to satisfy demand from clients not only by increasing production capacity, but also by launching a new product line. The study phase for new laminates characterised by light weight, of which we previewed some details in the last issue, has come to a successful end. The reference market in this case is Europe, where the problem of weight is felt more keenly than elsewhere.

"A few months ago we started thinking about a new product type," explains Simone Colombarini, Sole Director of Vetroresina S.p.A., "setting ourselves the goal of creating laminates lighter than the current ones. The study phase progressed to product sample testing, reaching the definition of a new type of laminate that, while maintaining characteristics and performance, is around 5–10% lighter." To pursue this ambitious project, Vetroresina S.p.A. requested collaboration from OCV, a multinational with factories in various countries, which has been engaged for some time in produ-

cing glass fibre (which as we know constitutes the reinforcement in fibreglass). The laminate available for production today is therefore lighter, up to 10% less weight, meaning that in a mid-sized motorhome, where fibreglass is used for covering exteriors and interiors, the weight can be reduced by as much as 20 kg. And we're well aware that 20 kilos only seem limited, because they need to be added to the weight reduction achieved with other elements that make up the motorhome as a whole.

"To achieve this result while keeping the



characteristics of the laminate unaltered," continues Colombarini, "we acted on two fronts, on one hand optimising the use of glass fibre and on the other selecting the most appropriate resins." The thickness of the sheets can also remain identical to the current one, but slightly lower thicknesses are adopted for significant improvements in weight. What should remain essentially the same is the cost for vehicle manufacturers: no small matter. Vetroresina S.p.A. is currently proposing the new lightweight laminates to the various European groups in the sector, who can carry out the customary tests before moving on to the definitive applications. It's interesting to note that all types of sheets used to make motorhomes will be produced with the new technology, so laminates for covering exteriors (walls, roof and floor), for interior walls and for the floor, including interior pre-finished sheets like floor panels with PVC coating.

This product development takes place in a context of general euphoria on the European market, where fibreglass is finding increasing applications in the construction of recreational vehicles. And this is why

## Making it to the Italian Premier League

A company operating internationally, Vetroresina S.p.A. nonetheless maintains a link with its homeland, the province of Ferrara, to the extent that it has owned the local football team, the great SPAL, for four years. The commitment shown in these years has been outstanding, and in the month of June, after the Italian Serie B championship, the results were in: SPAL was promoted to Serie A (Italian Premiere League) and will therefore compete in Italy's most important league next season. No small satisfaction for Vetroresina S.p.A., whose owners can relish this result together with the whole staff.



Vetroresina S.p.A., which certainly has no desire to turn away from demand from clients, has decided to expand its production capacity. A few months ago, work began on an expansion to the Masi San Giacomo site: within the first months of 2018, there will be a new wing of the production site, of approximately 5,000 m<sup>2</sup>, where new machinery will be installed. It's a significant investment – we're talking 5 million euros – but the stakes are considerable: the aim is to

increase production by 20%, passing from the current 5 million m<sup>2</sup> per year to the 6 million of the future. There's also set to be an increase in staff, something in the region of 15%. In addition to an increase in production, there will also be improvement at the product level, with greater consistency of quality. This will be possible first of all thanks to the new resin and gelcoat distribution lines, but also through perfecting the quality control and a new packing and packaging system. With the new production line it will also be possible to double the length of the rolls of laminate, from 60 to 120 metres. At the end of the day, this will benefit clients, who will have less wastage, but will also require less storage space for the rolls and even a reduction in processing times to unpack the rolls themselves and insert them on the processing lines.

## Company Profile

Established in 1968, Vetroresina SpA manufactures polyester resin laminates reinforced with fibreglass. The company's large production capacity results from specific research in the field of composite materials, associated with continued improvements in manufacturing techniques. To maintain and increase production levels, Vetroresina SpA has implemented a major investment strategy and, with the help of advanced technologies and close partnerships with universities and industry experts, has been capable of adapting to market changes and new requirements.

Sophisticated technology levels, combined with a special attention to aesthetics and materials, have led to a range of diversified products, extending to many areas of application. Vetroresina SpA has a production capacity of 129 units per day, with a production area that covers 46,000 m<sup>2</sup>. In June 2000, Vetroresina SpA inaugurated a production plant in the state of São Paulo, Brazil, in order to meet the needs of the South American market, and has operated a production facility in the United States since May 2008, dedicated to the North American market.

