

Translated Version

One mat, many applications.

Richard Steger of Dettighofen, Switzerland has been in the world of ground reinforcement mats for almost 30 years

Richard Steger adheres to a principle that he took with him from Africa: "Everything has to be as simple as possible". His office in Switzerland is perfectly set up to manage his domain; mats that can be used worldwide and under so many conditions. They are effective in accident situations such as if an aircraft goes off the runway, or if heavy trucks goes off the road. "Our mats are used wherever there is no getting through," Steger explains. Scobamat panels/mats are now available in three different versions. The Scobamat-HD, for example, is the strongest version. With a thickness of only four millimeters, a weight of six kilograms per square meter and dimensions of four by two meters is strong enough to bring any airliner back onto the runway. "Even with an Airbus A380 which has a landing weight of around 350 tons, these panels can withstand almost anything on soft ground thanks to their extreme compressive strength of 350 tons per square meter," says Richard Steger. The secret of the panels lies in their matrix structure. The panels are easy to use without additional auxiliary equipment and quick to deploy. Scobamats are produced in Switzerland on a large custom developed machine.

The owner is personally engaged

By being personally engaged, Richard ensures the highest product quality and reliability. Steger is also on site whenever tests are being carried out by EMPA, the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology. "With every test I want to know how the material behaves," he explains. Of course there are competing products on the market, but they are either ten times heavier, or require more preparation time or aids to be used properly". Steger proudly mentions that his first panels, 70 of them (8 by 3.70 meters in size) have been in use by the Zurich Airport Fire Brigade for over 27 years now.



Richard Steger hält stolz die neu entwickelte Helikopterplatte in seinen Händen.

A letter from the Protection and Rescue Department confirms that aircraft that have come over the edge of the runway are still being rescued using Scobamats. The same letter of recommendation was issued to the company by the Swiss Army and Air Force.

Helicopter landing pads for quick response operations

The idea of optimizing existing panels and using them as mobile helicopter landing pads came up in 2016, through a request from a Chinese company. The new product solution was to contain the following requirements; a compressive strength of up to 13 tons on an area of 30 by 20 centimeters, which basically corresponds to the size of a letter format. In addition, they were to be lightweight, have a dimension of two by one meter, be easy to deploy and transport, and optionally the panels should also be fluorescent so they can be seen in the dark. In short: two men should be able to set up a temporary landing site measuring 144 square meters in just 30 minutes.

Current status of the helicopter mats

The "Scobamat-MD" heli-plate has since been developed, patented and tested by Empa. The new mat only weighs seven kilograms per square meter, is fluorescent producible and resilient on soft surfaces of up to 350 tons compression weight. The interlocking technology to hold the mats together was specially developed for this product. The Scobamat solution can withstand temperatures from minus 55 to plus 80 degrees Celsius. These tests were carried out and confirmed by Empa. "For the production we found a manufacturing partner nearby in the canton of Thurgau, a company called Compotech AG," says Steger. They have the press necessary for the production of the panels and guaranteed capacity to produce the annual purchase quantities requested by a large customer from China. We recently received the confirmation from our customers that our product fulfills all their requirements. Development, patenting and production take place in the canton of Thurgau in Switzerland. Despite foreign offers to relocate the production abroad, the company founder and manager Richard Steger repeatedly rejected offers from foreign companies for the above mentioned reasons.

Africa shaped Richard Steger

It was clear from the beginning that his matting systems had to be easy to use. From 1974 to 1979 Steger worked as a development worker in Tanzania. "There I have internalized the motto to keep things simple" he explains. He's not thinking about quitting yet. "The business keeps me young and even at 69 I am still in the office on a regular basis," he says and continues working on the mats.