



■ **FIRM FOOTING:** Karl Ward, managing director of Huddersfield-based Surefoot Systems, which is celebrating 10 years in business, having supplied special anti-slip coatings for locations including the viewing gallery at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris (above)

# How the years seem to slip by!

A HUDDERSFIELD firm has marked 10 years in business – without putting a foot wrong.

Shepley-based Surefoot Systems UK has supplied slip-proof coatings for floors across Britain and Europe – with its product used extensively for shopping malls, council buildings, bars and restaurants, car showrooms, swimming baths and colleges.

It has also provided its Antislip product for one of the world's most iconic structures, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. The product, supplied through the firm's French distributor, helps tourists standing on the viewing gallery to keep their footing.

Karl Ward, managing director of Surefoot Systems, said slips and trips were the most common cause of non-fatal major injuries in the manufacturing and service sectors. They also accounted for more than half of all reported injuries suffered by members of the public.

Karl had a successful career in sales before launching Surefoot – which he did after following up an advert from a Dutch firm seeking a UK distributor for its anti-slip systems.

“It was something new to the UK,” he said. “There was no history to go by and no customers, but I already had a background in flooring and I thought I could do something with it. Ten years on, I look at the kind of companies we do work for and it is almost unbelievable.”

Surefoot's specially-treated flooring has been supplied and installed for major names

including Center Parcs, Mercedes-Benz, Hilton Hotels, McArthur Glen, Fitness First, Kent's Bluewater shopping centre and locally for Kirklees Active Leisure and Huddersfield's Imperial Arcade.

The company has also worked with Huddersfield University to develop a cleaning product specifically for tiled flooring.

Surefoot has also set up a national contractor network. “We work with a number of independent companies who apply our products,” said Karl. “They are co-partners who have helped us expand, particularly in Scotland and the south of England.”

The company has become well-known as a specialist for treating floors in shopping centres in places like York and Mansfield and for The Mall Group's retail centres, including ones in Luton and Uxbridge.

Despite the economic downturn, Karl said: “We have had the best start to a year we have ever had. We have developed quite a range of slip prevention coatings. It's not just about tiles – it's concrete and vinyl floorings.

And he added: “Slip testing is also high on the agenda for the Health and Safety Executive to sure that floor surfaces are okay. We have machinery which can be used to test the slip resistance of various types of flooring.”

Looking forward, Karl said: “We will continue as we have been doing – developing our contacts in the sectors we cover and providing products for a wider range of applications, such as metal fire escape steps.”