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ACCELERATING INNOVATION IN CONCRETE: LAFARGE INAUGURATES A UNIQUE NEW RESEARCH FACILITY

Lafarge is today inaugurating a new technological building dedicated to innovation in concrete at its research center in L'Isle d'Abeau, near Lyons, the world's largest building materials research facility. The creation of this unique facility demonstrates Lafarge's drive to accelerate the implementation of its strategy for innovation in concrete, a major strategic focus of its "Excellence 2008" plan.

THE ONLY FACILITY OF ITS KIND IN THE WORLD

With floor space of 2500m² and a ceiling 12m in height, the building houses an experimental concrete plant where laboratory research results will be tested in real time on an industrial scale. It also houses specific testing zones where materials can be tested and manipulated. This new research facility will therefore enable testing of formulas or experimental plans on an industrial scale while controlling external factors such as temperature or hygrometry. This will considerably speed up time to market for innovative products and solutions for the construction industry.

The floor was laid using Extensia™, a concrete with exceptional properties launched earlier this year, itself the result of research carried out at the L'Isle d'Abeau research center. Whereas before, it was not possible to pour slabs over 25m² without joints, Extensia™ makes it possible to pour 400m² surfaces without joints, a real technological breakthrough for the industry. What is more, its exceptional resistance allows a reduction in slab thickness, means that there is no need for steel mesh or fibers, and reduces maintenance requirements. The product therefore has a reduced ecological footprint, in particular through a significant reduction in the CO₂ emissions usually associated with pouring a large floor surface.

Outside the building, an additional 1500m² are set aside for product trials of greater dimensions and for storage of raw materials.

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At the inauguration, Bruno Lafont, Chairman and CEO of Lafarge stated:

"This new building will allow us to accelerate in our strategy for innovation in concrete and maintain our lead in designing value-creating products and solutions for sustainable construction. It will enable our research teams to go further still in creating new technologies that bring value for our customers and the Group."

The new research building is an addition to the existing 15,000m² Lafarge research center at L'Isle d'Abeau, the world's largest building materials research facility, using state-of-the-art technological equipment. The center employs 200 research scientists, who regularly work with other research institutions such as the CNRS (French National Center for Scientific Research), universities and engineering schools of international renown such as MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) in the USA or the Sherbrooke and Laval universities in Canada. The scientists also participate in projects with major worldwide laboratories, in particular through the NANOCEM network, which brings together industrial companies and universities for long-term research projects involving cement and concrete.

Lafarge's scientists have developed a scientific approach to understanding construction materials on a nanometric scale, which reveals the technical nature of concrete in many respects (physical and chemical phenomena, sensitivity to external parameters, evolution of mechanisms over time, etc.). They have therefore been able to identify and better understand the different phenomena underlying the behavior of concrete, knowledge that has allowed the development of numerous value-added concrete products that correspond to increasingly complex customer requirements in terms of product use, resistance, esthetics, site productivity, durability or thermal properties.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Lafarge is the world leader in building materials, with top-ranking positions in all of its businesses: Cement, Aggregates & Concrete and Gypsum. With 71,000 employees in over 70 countries, Lafarge posted sales of Euros 17 billion and net income of Euros 1.4 billion in 2006.

Lafarge is the only company in the construction materials sector to be listed in the 2007 '100 Global Most Sustainable Corporations in the World'. Lafarge has been committed to sustainable development for many years, pursuing a strategy that combines industrial know-how with performance, value creation, respect for employees and local cultures, environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources and energy. To make advances in building materials, Lafarge places the customer at the heart of its concerns. It offers the construction industry and the general public innovative solutions bringing greater safety, comfort and quality to their everyday surroundings.

Additional information is available on the web site at www.lafarge.com.

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