

# A DISTURBING ISSUE

## IT'S YOUR FAULT

Having problems with flooring jobs is nothing new. There's always some challenge with every project that almost always get resolved or is handled effectively by all parties involved. Even when you think you've done everything right something can go wrong. It happens and it's not unusual.

What's disturbing, and an issue that seems to be getting more common, is when the manufacturer or their representative tells you what to use and how to use it and even sends a rep or field technician out to insure you're doing things right and the job still goes wrong. Most disturbing is the same person that oversaw what you were doing and told you it was right,

according to the manufacturer and their guidelines, walks away from any culpability afterwards. Let's look at some disturbing examples.



A flooring contractor who installed a floating click system for Luxury vinyl plank used an acoustical underlayment supplied by the flooring manufacturer at their direction. The flooring was installed in several two story facilities. Shortly after installation the underlayment expanded and lifted the LVP.

This occurred over a heat run that was in the ceiling of the first level. The heat from the run was warming the wooden substrate of the second floor. The underlayment over this area is where the expansion or growing of the underlayment took place and when it expanded it lifted the LVP from one end of the building to the other right where the heat run ran beneath it.

When the flooring contractor notified the manufacturer of this event he was told he'd have to replace the underlayment on his own and that they had no liability, what happened wasn't their fault. Really? Aren't you the people who supplied and sold me this material and told me to use it? And now you want to walk away like you never heard of me? OK. The correction in this case is an expense of about \$5,000.00 to pull up the floor, replace the underlayment and reinstall the same LVP. No one could have foreseen the

influence of a heat run under the floor causing a reaction with the underlayment and certainly not the reaction that the underlayment expanded like a dry sponge suddenly soaked with water.



Next, a flooring contractor installs a sheet flooring product in a medical facility and uses a patching material mandated by the flooring manufacturer. The manufacturer's representative is on the job at start up and blesses the conditions and procedures being employed as they are in line with what they say to do and they're there to insure that. The flooring contractor's installer working with the material is master certified in every category of hard surface flooring – the guy and his crew know what they're doing. Shortly after the installation the flooring material starts to come off the concrete substrate and when lifted up the patch appears to have broken down. In fact the patch looks like it has decomposed based on the evidence exhibited and based on that evidence the failure appears to be a floor patch product issue. It could have been mixed incorrectly but wait, wasn't the manufacturer's rep there to make sure all was done correctly and didn't he say it was? We can determine if the floor patch material was mixed correctly by analyzing it in the lab for pore size, W/C ratio etc....that would



eliminate an over-watering (applicator) error. We can take unopened product that could be tested at the lab for quality and composition. If the slab was non-absorptive and the flooring product was a slow dryer compared to other products it may have prevented proper drying and curing of the patch which would result in decreased performance and loss of strength. But again, wasn't the flooring manufacturer's rep overseeing the floor prep and installation of his product and condoning all of the procedures being employed? So, another flooring installation fails that was directed by the flooring manufacturer that they back away from. On top of this the manufacturer has discontinued the use of the floor prep and patch material – big surprise there and more indication that the patch is the problem. To add more credence to the mandated patch being the problem, the flooring contractor uses a name brand floor prep and patch material on the 92% majority of the same job with no problems whatsoever. Wouldn't you draw the conclusion that everything being the same, except the one flooring product and floor prep making up 8% of the job that failed, that the products that failed were at fault? Makes perfect sense right? Well again we have a flooring manufacturer overseeing the prep and installation of their product using their mandated materials and when it fails responding that the flooring contractor did something wrong. REALLY!!!!!! Explain that to me. Common sense alone tells you the patch the manufacturer said to use with their product is the problem.



## THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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And yet another one. An epoxy adhesive used under hospital beds that is supposed to negate indentations in the sheet vinyl which does work but when the concrete substrate develops small cracks freezes the sheet vinyl in place so it doesn't move resulting in hairline cracks in the concrete being mirrored in the sheet vinyl. This only happens with the non-yielding epoxy adhesive. All the other flooring material, installed with a different adhesive and that's installed directly adjacent to the affected flooring with the crack in the concrete continuing under it is fine. There were no indentations in the sheet vinyl from the beds but apparently no one thought of the consequences of using an epoxy adhesive over a substrate that had the potential to crack. Another important point overlooked that resulted in the material having to be replaced and an alternative adhesive used to prevent the reoccurrence of this condition. Another one of those snakes in the woodpile that no one foresaw but that the flooring contractor winds up eating.

And in yet another case which is all too common today is carpet tile curling shortly after installation that the manufacturer says can be fixed. They do so by sending in their own crews to correct the curling by re-gluing it using an adhesive that's so aggressive you can't get the material off the floor. This negates the whole sales proposition of being able to replace a carpet tile if one needs to do so for any reason. Is the product still merchantable for service and fit for the intended purpose of use if it doesn't do what it's supposed to do and defies one of the basic reasons for an end user to buy it?

Here's my opinion on all of this; if you make any flooring material or ancillary product that is designed, engineered or constructed to be used alone or in conjunction with a flooring product and it's supposed to perform a particular function and perform as expected and it typically does, you better make darn sure it does what you say it will and test the daylight out of it to prove it. And if you make comments or promises your product can't keep and they fail then you need to fess up and fix the failure. The mistakes you make that cost the innocent money and their reputation are on you. Don't make comments that have no basis in fact or defy logic, try to alter the laws of physics with your words or put exclusions in your warranty after touting how great it is that take away any benefit of the product your selling.

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It seems we've entered a period in history where nothing is anyone's fault. Like having a criminal on tape watching him irrefutably commit a crime and calling him the "alleged" offender. Alleged nothing, he is the offender, did you see someone else doing something? So it is with flooring. You're being overseen by a technical representative or other representative, doing what you are being advised and actually mandated to do, being told it's correct and then, after the job fails, being told you must have done something wrong when a problem occurs. Wait! Weren't you guys standing next to me when we did this? And now we're being accused of doing something wrong!? Is this a dream! Well then, if I did something wrong you must have done something wrong because we did what you said to do while you were there. If I'm driving the bus and you tell me to drive off the cliff because it's the right thing to do then I guess I'm at fault because I was the driver and the person who told me to do it gets off scot free. In the law the teller of the instructions causing the result is called an accessory and equally responsible and it should be the same in these situations. If I have to suffer for the failure so do you because you actually told me what to do and supplied the materials that resulted in the activity and thus the failure if one should occur. You can't hide behind anything else. The right thing to do is find out why there was a failure and provide a fix and resolution. What happened to saying I'm sorry, we messed up and we'll help you fix it. A great business practice by the way. If you don't know what went wrong and why and how to fix it, call someone who does, like us. We'll tell you what went wrong and why and how to fix it. We do that all the time. In fact sometimes we do that for manufacturers and even further sometimes we even develop the technology that actually will work and provide it to the industry so we know what works and what doesn't and how to fix it.



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So here's a solution to the insanity. The manufacturer of the product, whatever it is, that's telling you what to do, overseeing the job, and telling you everything is correct and fine, should be willing to put everything in writing and guarantee that it meets their guidelines so you can cover it if it fails. See how well this flies.

Some tips. For those of you on a flooring project, whether you're the GC, flooring contractor, installer, architect, designer, end user or owner you should document everything, take pictures and make notes of anything that may seem eventful that should be memorialized. If anyone tells you to do something as described in this article, get it in writing. You have no idea how valuable this information is if a problem arises and you have the device with you at all times to record all this information – your cell phone. There is even an app you can download onto your cell phone to take pictures, make comments on and store your photos that is being utilized by several floor covering companies. We will discuss this option more in coming issues.

Most of the flooring problems and failures we get involved in could have been avoided. It bothers me to see this and it bothers me more when someone tells somebody to do something and it doesn't work and they walk away. Don't do that, admit the mistake and help correct it. It's the right thing to do and it's a good thing. We'll help you if you need it all you have to do is ask.

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