



# The Commercial FLOORING REPORT

## PROFESSIONAL TESTING LABORATORY THE CSI LABORATORY FOR THE FLOOR COVERING INDUSTRY



### CARPET CSI

Professional Testing Laboratory, Inc., is the CSI Laboratory for floor covering. PTL does the day to day testing for manufacturers, the Federal Government, and large corporations but they also do

investigative analysis to figure out mystery problems, defects and complaint and concern issues. Following are two interesting cases PTL solved.

### CASE OF THE PINK SPOTS

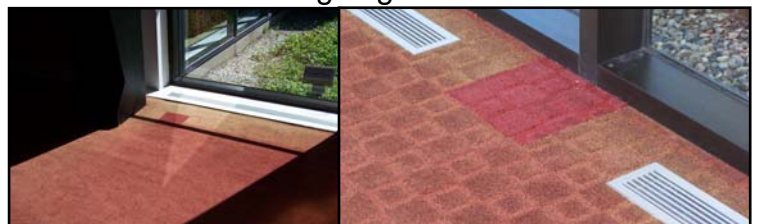
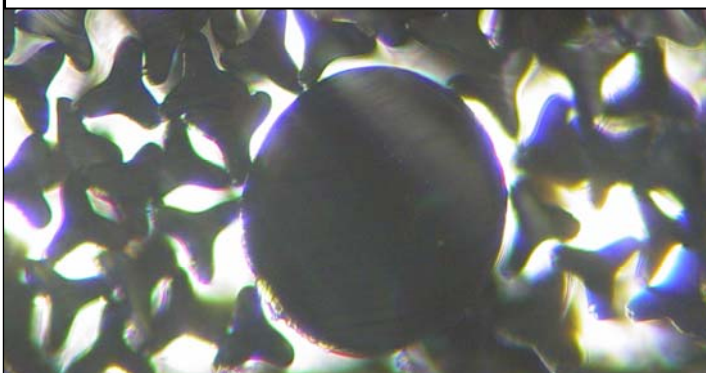
PTL received a small sample of previously installed carpet that had quarter sized pinkish spots randomly (or so reported) throughout the carpeted area. They analyzed yarn from these spots looking for all types of contaminants from bleaches to oxidizers to paints, stains and dyes and did not find any real evidence of anything. So they took the analysis to a different level. They asked that a control (non-discolored sample) be submitted to go along with the group of pinkish tufts they had been working with. They took fibers from both areas and had them tested via Proton NMR. Once the results were analyzed they were able to isolate the actual dye components.

The results indicated a dye component was missing in the control tufts as compared to the pink tufts. They then had an "AHA"

moment; the pink tufts were not the issue, the control tufts were. The original carpet color was the pinkish hue and had changed color over time, losing red pigment, due to light and other atmospheric contaminants. The end user admitted after a full explanation of the testing results that they had recently moved furnishings around in the area and the spots were exactly in the places where the legs of all the furniture had been. This would have been nice to know up front but since the lab was 1000 miles away and depending on someone else to give them facts, it made the issue much more difficult than it should have been. It did teach us a couple of good investigative lessons. One is the obvious is sometimes opposite of the answer. The second is ask questions of people that can give you the right answers pertaining to the situation and gather those facts before you start the analysis. It's also best to actually be at the site of the concern to see first hand what's going on.

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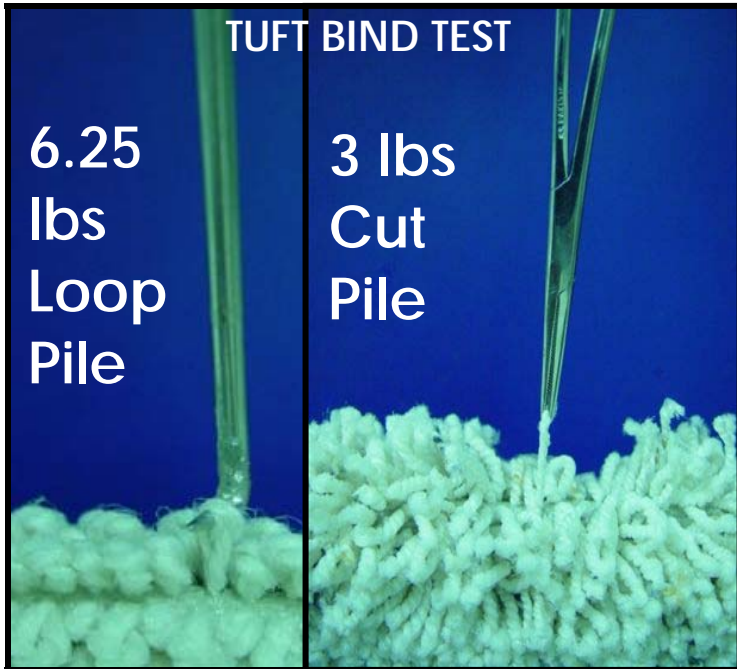
Fiber Testing Cross Section View



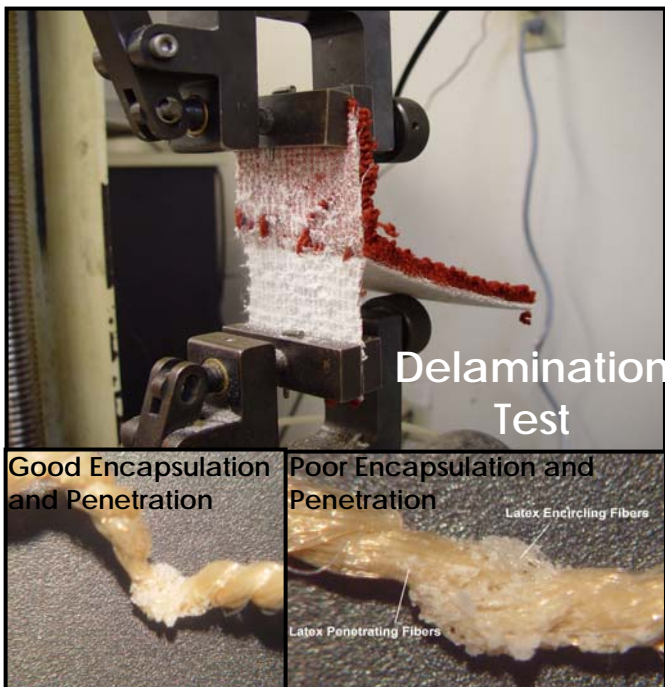
Color Change from Sunlight Exposure

### CASE OF BALD CARPET

A carpet manufacturer brought in photos of areas in front of hotel doorways in the corridor where the yarn from the carpet was completely gone. From their explanation and directions they assumed the issue was traffic related and had the lab looking into the physical characteristics of retained material that had never been installed. A whole series of physical tests were conducted; tuft bind,



delamination tests, bundle wrap and penetration, Hexapod walk tests, and others looking to determine why the yarn was being worn off this nylon carpet. Nothing structural was found wrong



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with the carpet. The lab decided to play a hunch as they did not think the issue was a physical defect from manufacturing but was from a chemical contaminant. An actual affected piece of carpet from the installation

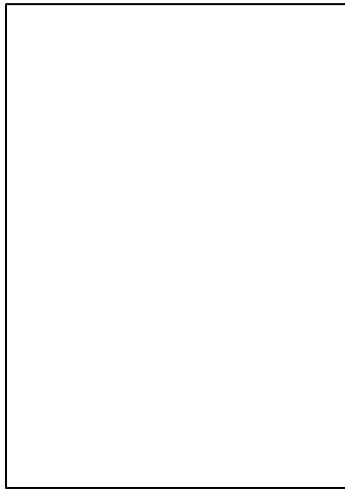


BLEACH DRIBBLED ONTO CARPET

encompassing one of the affected areas was requested. PTL used simple extraction techniques and compared the residues found directly around the missing yarns to a piece of never installed control material. They found a heavy concentration of Sodium Hypochlorite or in laymen's terms, basic household bleach. It turns out the maid staff was using the guest's white towels to clean the bathroom and hard surface areas with bleach. They then threw the towels out the front

door of the guest room where they laid somewhat wet with bleach residue on them until the staff was finished with the entire room clean up. The bleach residue from the towel transferred to the carpet just a little each time. While this carpet was resistant to color change





from bleach, the long term wetting and drying created a very intense concentration level of bleach on the fibers from this cycle occurring each day.

This heavy

concentration would be reactivated each time wetness or humidity was present. Long term exposure of nylon to bleach can lead to the fiber turning brittle and breaking very easily. So the weakened fiber would break off little by little each time the carpet was vacuumed finally resulting in bald carpet.



Bald Spot

They test vacuum cleaners, spot cleaners, cleaning chemicals, carpet cleaning machines and general cleaning systems under the Carpet and Rug Institute Green Label program. This program was developed to make sure the products you use on your flooring materials work well and cause no harm to your floors.



Vacuum Cleaner Test



Carpet Staining Test

Professional Testing Laboratory has a multitude of capabilities covering a vast array of flooring types. They are carpet and flooring experts due to all the levels of manufacturing processes, in which they are involved to check quality control, develop product specifications, test for defects and even develop marketing. Their core strengths include carpet, laminate, wood, vinyl, athletic turf, rubber and adhesive testing. They solve carpet or flooring problems to make sure the flooring performs well, doesn't burn

too much, cleans more easily and they even help to protect the end users well being.



Laminate Test

Professional Testing is a fully independent Federally Certified Laboratory that provides unbiased testing results and even some opinions to any individual, corporation, manufacturer, retailer, distributor, or agency that wants to employ them. Often times LGM will receive the test results from PTL and do the interpretation report or together we will create conditions that will allow us to follow the evidence to determine the cause of a complaint or situation. Working together there is virtually nothing we can't determine regarding a floor covering issue, concern, complaint or claim.

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## Federal Court Says "Or Equal" Up to Specifying Source

Just what does the term "Or Equal" mean and how much influence does it have on a specification? According to this Federal Court ruling it is the specifiers right, be it the architect, designer or end user, to state exactly what floor covering they want and if they are willing to accept an alternative. In some cases what has been selected may not be the correct flooring material for the application. It would be up to an educated and knowledgeable individual to suggest another product be used to deliver the performance expected. It may not be equal to what was specified but better. However, in the context of this Federal Court ruling an "Or Equal" product would at least be within the parameters of the specified product. Some of you may be unfamiliar with this document so here it is for your information.

Affirming a decision handed down by the U.S. District Court of Massachusetts, the Federal 1st Circuit Court in the case of Whitten Corp. vs. Paddock, Inc. was backed up by the U.S. Supreme Court which refused to hear further appeals. The decision defines the specifying party's clear authority at the federal level where previous decisions have been in lower courts. The four major rulings are:

1. The Court ruled that proprietary specifications are not a violation of antitrust laws. Further, the court stated that trained professionals, specifiers, make informed judgments on products which they feel best serve their clients needs. Technically, few brands of materials or equipment are exactly alike and if the specifier wants to limit the specifications to one source, he has the right to do so and to enforce it.

2. The Court ruled that other suppliers or manufacturers can qualify as "Or Equal" only when the specifier chooses to waive specifications and permit those suppliers or manufacturers to bid; however, it clearly stated that the specifying source is charged with the responsibility and judgment for determining whether a proposed substitution is an

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"Or Equal". Further, where "Or Equal" is not stated in the specification, it is still the specifying source's decision as to what producers do or do not qualify as "Or Equal".

3. The Court stated that the specifier "may waive specifications in order to obtain a more desirable product to the client." The implication is again that only the specifier (from start to finish of the design process) can ultimately decide that another desirable product is available in lieu of the product originally specified in the client's best interest.

4. The Court concluded, "The burden is on the supplier or manufacturer who has not been specified to convince the specifier that their product is equal for the purpose of a particular project."





The complete legal decision is published in 424 Federal Report, 2a Series, pages 25-36; 376 Federal Supplement, pages 125-138; 508 Federal Reporter, 2d Series, pages 547-562.

Let me add that in the case of manufacturers' reps some are seasoned enough to know the limitations of their products and those of their competitors. These are the older, more experienced reps, the best of which, in my opinion, you'll find in the Hospitality segment of the marketplace. In all other situations the younger the rep the less likely they are to have the know how to suggest a product that meets the "or equal" parameters. Reps, contrary to the beliefs of many end users, designers or architects, are not technical people. They know their product but they may not know carpet or whatever flooring material they represent well enough to insure the best product gets used. This is not meant to cast a shadow on the rep; it's just the way it is. Since the biggest problem in the industry is putting the wrong product in the wrong place, not installation, it's important not to get caught in this trap.

When you really need to know what works where, why and how you can call us for guidance. We'll make sure you get what you want and that it will perform up to your expectations. Then you can buy it from the rep you want to do business with as long as it will live up to the end users expectations. This will make the end user happy and prevent problems, headaches and losses for everyone else in the chain. Today, with the economy and business being what it is, we all have to do it right the first time.

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