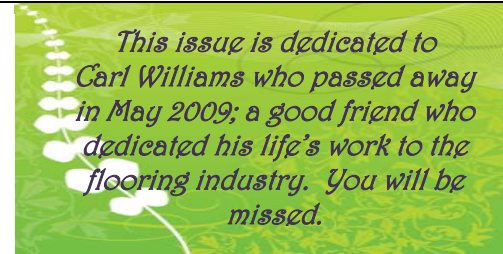




# The Commercial FLOORING REPORT



## HD 2009 Expo



### THE HOSPITALITY DESIGN SHOW

The Hospitality Design Show held in Las Vegas on May 12<sup>th</sup> through 15<sup>th</sup> is one of my favorite trade shows. In my opinion HD is one of the classiest exhibitions there is for floor covering and it's a dress up event. It's nice to see people dressed as professionals when they attend this event. It reflects the significance of the hospitality market and the position it occupies that of high fashion and cutting edge design. This is where you'll see the most highly styled, eye popping high end floor covering products displayed by the sharpest manufacturers in the industry. Each year the manufacturers seem to outdo themselves in styling and innovation. At HD you'll see flooring products that you won't see at any other venue in the industry. Even if you're not in the Hospitality business but you supply or work with high end clients, this is where you'll be exposed to the endless possibilities of unlimited styling and design. The only thing that's limiting in product design here would be your imagination.

The most innovative technology in tufting can be seen at the HD show from companies such as Burtco, Signature, Clayton Miller, Northwest, Atlas, Templeton and Marabella, names you may not be all that familiar with outside of the hospitality market segment but these are industry tufted styling leaders. HD is where you'll also see the leaders in woven carpet where the best of the best show. These manufacturers, in my opinion are the Rolls Royce of the carpet industry with companies such as Couristan, Brintons, Innovative, Ulster, Cambridge and Stark.

In the printed segment Milliken shines with their

étage series, the most intricate and innovative printed product on the market. Shaw and Durkan also have high styled printed product in this category.

Also in high styled tufted carpets is Bentley Prince Street and InterfaceFlor with very unique high performance products that "put the lights" on the floor. Bentley Prince Street incorporates the new Contact Release backing by Free Lay, the most advanced installation technology on the market today. Both these manufacturers also have carpet tiles for hospitality a product that is growing in popularity in this market.

You'd have also seen Healthier Choice cushion, the hands down leader in green technology for cushion and the highest performance cushion product on the market.



In hard surface the leader is Centiva. No one creates luxury vinyl tile like Centiva does and they continue to push the envelope in styling. If you've never taken the opportunity to attend the Hospitality Design show you should treat yourself and make plans for next year. Here you'll be

exposed to design and fashion in floor covering you won't see anywhere else. There's no reason you can't use these products in installations other than hospitality. Flooring, whether you want to believe it or not, is a fashion statement that caps all the other elements used to design a unique space.

## WHEN 30 YEARS OF INSTALLATION EXPERIENCE COULD BE BAD

There are times when we get called out on a complaint or a floor covering installation issue where the installers on the job have had 20 to 30 years of experience. Or we hear "this guy is the best there is or the best we have." Or we get a call where an installer is on the job, supposedly familiar with the product he's to install, and he starts asking questions he should know the answers to or when asked questions about the flooring material or substrate, he has no idea what you're talking about. Installing flooring today can be compared with the medical profession. The physician must continue his/her education in every area of their field or they could misdiagnose a problem. They must keep up with the latest technology, medications, and illness if they want to be at the top of their game. Today's medical industry is advancing so rapidly it is near impossible to keep up with unless you're in the day to day.

Flooring products are now on the market or will soon be that change the way flooring is made and how it is and will be installed. Carpet is being constructed in ways and with materials never used before. This demands the installer to continue learning the products and techniques to be on top of their game. You wouldn't go to a doctor that knows nothing about the swine flu and you shouldn't use an installer who doesn't know the fuzzy side goes up.

Because it is incumbent on the installer to further his education it is sometimes overlooked, or put on the back burner. Since there are no industry requirements for continuing education credits, CEU's, like there is for designers, architects, etc., a good experienced installer could become a liability if faced with a new flooring product he has not encountered. We certainly understand that experience is invaluable we just want to emphasize the need to stay abreast of what is coming down the pipe line. One way you can be assured of having an installer who is knowledgeable about the most recent advances in installation technology and flooring products is by having a trained certified installer. There are a few floor training schools out there two of them being INSTALL and Certified Floorcovering Installers (CFI). With an INSTALL or CFI

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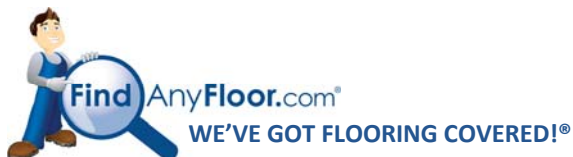
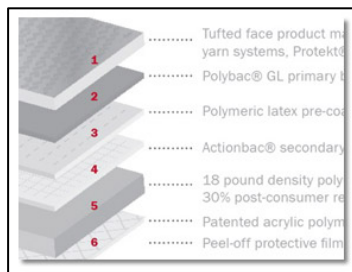
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actually work with all flooring manufacturers regularly to keep up to date on the new technologies being introduced whether they are in carpet construction, new backing materials, adhesives, hard surface products or substrate issues. No one else is doing this with more commitment and more day to day contact. Patterned carpet in particular requires a special skill set not possessed by the untrained, uninitiated and inexperienced. There are independent firms who specialize installing patterned carpet. Just to mention two we recommend and work with are Mr. David's and Mastercraft. Not only do these two firms specialize in patterned carpet installation, they can be called upon to complete or if possible, fix a job that has gone sour.



What are the reasons for the rapid change in flooring products that should be challenging installation? First and foremost is the move toward green products. The industry is scrambling to get to market with products that have recycled content, can be recycled or products that are more natural in content. This move has created changes in secondary and soon, primary backing systems, yarn systems, and hard surface materials. In fact there is technology in place that, when implemented, will completely eliminate a primary and secondary backing in carpet as it has been known. These products all require a special knowledge to install them and advancements in that area are also under way or on the market. The Free Lay or Bentley

Prince Street's No-Adhesive Contact Release System completely eliminates the need for adhesives and negates having to employ the double stick installation method. Installation problems and failures are virtually eliminated so the selected carpet stays on the floor longer without need to replace due to the installation being compromised.



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Another factor is the influence of substrates, in particular concrete, and the myriad of challenges it presents to installations.

Moisture in the concrete, if not taken out of play, will cause installation failures resulting in all of the flooring material having to be pulled up and replaced and the substrate remediated. If an installer or installation contractor is not aware of, made aware of or working in conjunction with a responsible general contractor employing the latest technologies to prevent an installation failure, there can be an inevitable and catastrophic loss.

This is not stuff an installer with 30 years of experience can brag about unless they have continued their knowledge of the science behind all of these issues.

**pH Testing**



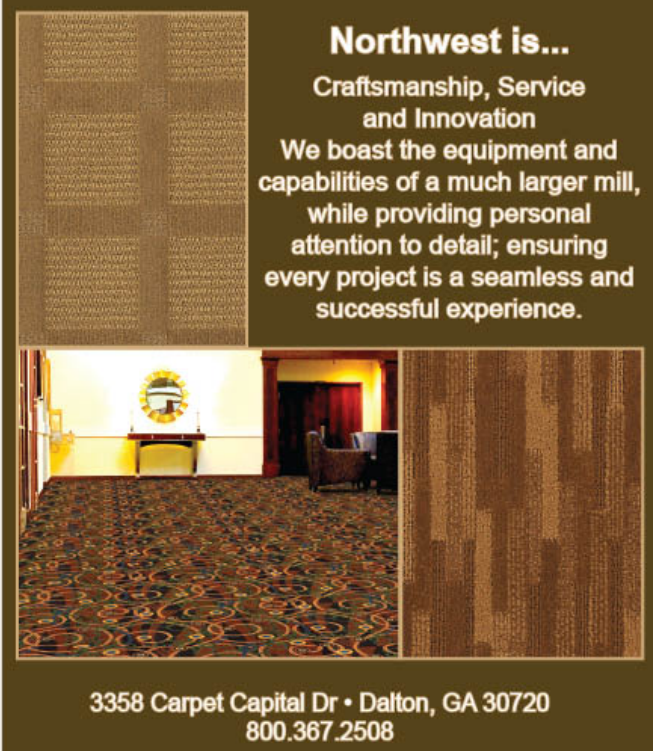
**Cut Back & Plasticizer Migration**



But unfortunately many haven't either because they have not been given the opportunity or can't take the time because they have to make a living. No longer can years of experience qualify you as an expert installer if you have no knowledge of the products you're working with or the influence of the substrate on them. These technologies are coming down the pike so fast that no installer is going to be able to keep up with what's new and different unless they have an ongoing vehicle for education. Being involved in the flooring industry you have to be aware of several recent introductions of green oriented products that have failed on the floor. There will likely be more of them, in soft and hard surface products, either from some unknown component or factor in the marketplace that thwarts the performance or integrity of the product.

How much better are your children or grandchildren at using computers or communication devices? The comparison is the same with new flooring technology. 20 to 30 years of experience no longer makes an expert installer, unless he too has the means and motive to stay current. Unless we all keep up with the latest in anything in use today to be on top of business, much less flooring materials, the world will pass us by.

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**WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW WILL HURT YOU**

It's getting a little ridiculous hearing about substrate issues that general contractors, end users, architects, designers or anyone else specifying floor covering think are unimportant, irrelevant or not an influence on their project. When a professional commercial flooring contractor tells you that they have grave concerns for the integrity of the

Concrete Testing



installation because of something they are well aware of that may cause a failure you would be well advised to listen. If you have tests conducted on the substrate before the building is fully enclosed and the HVAC system is up and running as it would be when the building is occupied for use, the test results are useless because they won't be accurate. If the substrate tests are not conducted exactly as mandated and directed by ASTM test protocol you can throw the results out the window. And just because one of the aforementioned parties thinks everything "looks" good or thinks the concrete looks or feels dry or is 100 years old and shouldn't be a problem, has no bearing or legitimacy on what really is. Look, words don't change



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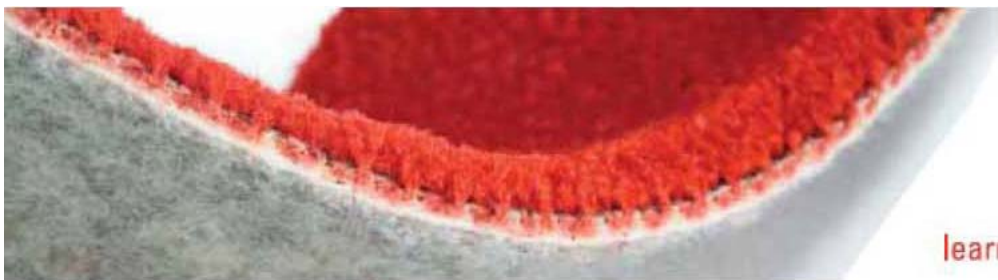
science or the laws of physics. Thinking something will not be a problem because it doesn't look like it will be or you don't think it will be or you don't want to believe it will be or you don't have the time or money to do it as it should be done, will surely come back to haunt you later. These are not situations you want to fool around with. If you have any questions on whether or not you should or shouldn't take an action or have a failure and need to know why, call in expert help. That would be us. We have associates in the field everyday; traveling all over the country working on the types of issues you don't think will occur. I can assure you, as sure as the sun will rise again tomorrow, one of you will be confronted with this problem, even if you don't think or believe you will. This is one of the most painful, costly and prolific problem areas we have in the flooring industry today and it's not going away anytime soon. Our leading substrate expert says, "To avoid flooring failures on concrete substrates you have to take the substrate out of play."



Substrate Moisture Issues

you have to take the substrate out of play." I'll add that you have to take the flooring material out of play as well. If you need a little more of a pinch to accept the reality of this issue; almost every one of these failures will suck a minimum of six figures out of the budget you were so concerned about staying within or below, not to mention the loss from business being interrupted and your reputation. Now, how about taking this issue a little more seriously? Remember, if it has to do with floor covering or substrate concerns, issues, technology, information, education, guidance or answers, LGM & Associates is the firm to call.

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