



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

Volume 50 • Page 1 for the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

TOTALLY GREEN PUBLICATION

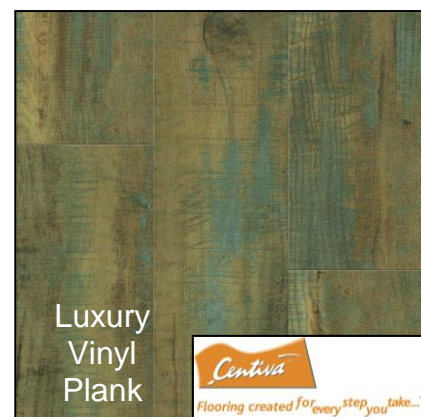
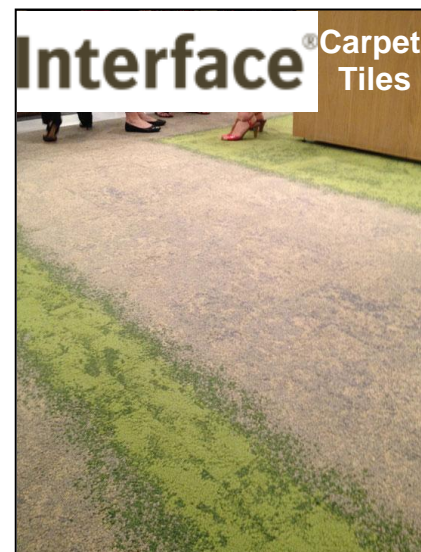
July 2012

WHAT CONSTITUTES WEAR IN FLOORING MATERIALS

This has been a concern for as long as there has been floor covering. Old materials consisted of dull and lifeless looking hard surface tiles or sheet goods. The old Battleship linoleums, mostly gray in color or hard surface tiles that were brown, reddish brown, black, gray or various shades of non-brilliant looking, unexciting and definitely not fashion forward flooring. Nothing mattered but the performance of the product and the products were so dull that nothing really affected them except for soil and that was hidden, for the most part, by how bland the product was.



Fast forward to today. Flooring material, relatively speaking, is as high tech as the latest version of the cell phone. If you attended Neocon in Chicago recently or the Hospitality Design show in Las Vegas, you saw flooring products that would make you marvel. The new carpet tiles in particular, one of the flooring industry's hottest products, have so much styling – colors fading into one another, patterns that are truly art and varying sizes that if you were not impressed you had to be comatose. Hard surface flooring takes no back seat either regardless of what the material is, but especially Luxury Vinyl Tiles. If style color and fashion is important to you, and obviously it is, you'd be hard pressed to choose a product because there's so much to choose from. Anything you can imagine in style, color or pattern, can now be made with soft and hard surface flooring, and the industry just keeps stretching the limits. With that said the excitement to use these new fancy flooring materials may make you so giddy that you lose sight of the fact that the fashion must also fit the function. This is one of the weak links in selecting the appropriate flooring materials. Yes, they are flooring materials, meant to be walked on, spilled on, cleaned, used, abused and otherwise not always treated with the respect they deserve, but it doesn't mean they'll all perform the same in any given situation. Therefore you have to make sure that the fashion does in fact fit the function. In that respect nothing's changed. Pretty doesn't make something practical and it may be easier than ever to get yourself into trouble by going overboard with the fashion.

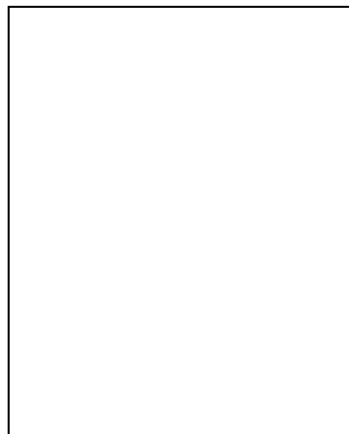


The key to making sure you and those you work for and with who buy, sell, use, install, specify, bid or maintain flooring, don't become disappointed with the selected flooring, is to look for performance.

That means the flooring material must function effectively, which means live up to the expectations one has for it looking good over its life expectancy, whatever that may be. When this doesn't happen or when the flooring material goes ugly early, the primary complaint is that it is wearing out or not wearing well. The term "wear" in the floor covering industry by those making the complaint is that the product has lost part or all of its original appearance.

In the floor covering industry wear, to a manufacturer and in their warranties, means the abrasive loss of surface material, whether carpet fiber, vinyl wear layer, tile surface, wood surface; you get the picture. Anything that affects the original appearance, other than soil, is often considered wear by the end user, architect or designer. To belabor the point, scuffs, scratches, dents, color change, pattern loss, matting, crushing and so on gets lumped into the wear category, rightfully or not.

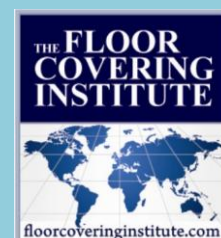
Take a look at a stark example of a complaint filed on a commercial nylon carpet that was installed in an office facility of several thousand square feet for a company that did light manufacturing and testing of their product. When the space was vacated the building owner was appalled to see how the carpet was stained and worn, which they thought it was. They also thought the tenant may have spray painted desks or furnishings and got overspray on the carpet. The dark would not clean out and didn't transfer onto any cleaning medium. When the carpet was sent for testing no one could figure out what had happened. When samples and photos were sent to us it was obvious the fiber itself had undergone what is called degradation.



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That is a physical breakdown of the fiber typically caused by UV light, from external or internal sources – natural or artificial light - affecting the fiber and normally due to the lack of, not enough of or compromise of the UV inhibitor in the fiber. The pattern created by this event, which could be construed as areas of wear, also suggests that some foreign contaminant may have come in contact with the carpet surface to catalyst or cause the fiber degradation. Fiber degradation, when due to a defect in the product, will affect all the exposed areas of the flooring. You can see in the photos that all the exposed areas, which would include the obvious traffic paths, are not affected. This is what one may think is wear but in fact it is a real problem that has negatively affected this carpet. Let's not forget wear can be associated with all flooring materials, none of them are immune, see the photos we've included of wood and ceramic.



Appearance Change – Loss of Finish



Tile Surface Loss

Going back to the new pretty products; as gorgeous as they are, not all styles, colors and patterns will work everywhere and to think otherwise is delusional. They may perform but they won't stay looking good. This is not necessarily because they don't possess the physical attributes to perform but because they possess a characteristic that is not appropriate for the use and the space.

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Let the finger pointing begin:

Most floor covering wear issues are due to the wrong product being used in the wrong place. This is almost always avoidable if some thought is given to the selection process. As I've mentioned before and have done so in many presentations, you should never have to ask yourself, "How could I have avoided this problem?" At that point the meters running on the size of the loss and the cash is flowing down the drain and no one's making any friends.

So how do you prevent having problems that are associated with wear? The process is actually fairly simple but it requires a conscious effort and a willingness to know the products and understand how they will be used, abused and cared for where they're going to be installed.

Here's what you have to do:

- ✓ Qualify the end use and end user
- ✓ Qualify the product & its application
- ✓ Establish expectations, then meet or exceed them
- ✓ Put the right product in the right place and properly care for it so it maintains its appearance without problems or complaints
- ✓ Consciously make an effort to avoid this question: "How could I have avoided this problem?"
- ✓ Know that the wanted or needed product always exists. The goal is to find it, or find someone who knows what works best. We can help you with all of this.

This simple list, which you can use as a check list when considering flooring material, will show you what will cause wear related problems:

- ✓ Wrong type of material
- ✓ Wrong color
- ✓ Wrong construction
- ✓ Wrong specification
- ✓ Wrong type of installation
- ✓ Product not suitable for intended purpose of use
- ✓ Lack of product understanding, including how and where it should be used
- ✓ Failure to qualify the end use or user

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And finally keep the following in mind which all relates to the previously listed facts:

Discover what factors lay the groundwork for an expensive flooring disaster

Learn proactive strategies to prevent or mitigate potential problems

Develop a recovery plan to minimize facility downtime if a flooring crisis strikes, this you'll want to avoid at all costs.

Remember that if you need help with any of this or any flooring problem, concern or question you can give us a call. Making sure the right product gets into the right place is something we do regularly. We're here to help keep you out of trouble so take advantage of us.



The new **Velcro Brand Carpet Protector** is ready to go. This product takes the place of clear plastic coverings with pressure sensitive adhesive that have created a host of problems for the industry. The new **Velcro Brand Carpet Protector** is made for use on loop and cut and loop carpet; the vast majority of commercial carpet. Bentley Prince Street is the first carpet manufacturer to offer this unique product. Contact Velcro for more information and samples.



Systems like EnviroSTIX for hard surface and hard backed flooring materials and Bentley Prince Street Contact Release for carpet are systems that will help prevent the failure of flooring installations. There is more technology coming, most of which we are involved with. We'll keep you informed to help you. In the meantime understand that moisture, temperature and humidity have a profound effect on flooring materials and the integrity of their installation.

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