

CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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SOME NEW THINGS YOU NEED TO BE AWARE OF TO AVOID FLOORING PROBLEMS AND FAILURES

That's a long title I know, but what I want to cover in this issue are conditions and product components that are creating new challenges. Most of these things are hiding in plain sight. First, we have to look at the overwhelming problems created by luxury vinyl plank and tile. We've been inundated, again, this year with vinyl tile and plank failures, both with the products themselves and the installation of them.

So, what are some of the things you need to look for and be aware of that are blatantly obvious that you may not have concerned yourselves with before reading this? First, very often on commercial jobs there are hundreds of boxes of vinyl tile or plank. Just because the flooring material may look the same on the face, doesn't mean they're the same from that point down. Remember, the face is only a picture of what the product is supposed to represent, be it wood, stone or anything else. It has nothing to do with what's beneath it, where the real causes of problems exist.

When on a job make sure you check the lot numbers. Different lot numbers mean different runs of product. Check the product dates. Different production dates mean different runs of product. For example, if this was thousands of yards of carpet and you ordered it four to six months apart, or it was produced months apart, would you expect the color to be exactly the same? No, and it wouldn't be, even if the variation was slight. So why would you think vinyl tile and plank is any different? Domestically produced carpet would have more controls and quality checks at the mill producing it. With vinyl tile and plank, made in layers and made in different plants, at different times, on different equipment with variations in the materials, why would you expect it to be exactly the same? With these products, and I've said this many times in previous newsletters, you don't know what you're seeing or what you're looking at when you look AT the product. The culprit causing the problem, whatever it might be – cupping, curling, doming, edge or end lift, etc., is hiding in plain sight within the product.

The lack of knowledge about these products by people who don't make them, or have no control over the production of them, but only sell or distribute them, is monumental. Yet they'll tell you what's wrong and that it's your fault there's a problem when they haven't a clue themselves. We'll see a good example of this later on when you read a response that'll have you talking to yourself.



COME SEE
ME AT
SURFACES
DETAILS
ON PAGE FOUR!!



Another issue is thinking something will work when it won't, such as installing a floating floor in a commercial environment and not expecting to have problems. The problems are easily predictable, and would first involve the failure of the tongue and groove connecting system when the tongue breaks from the force of vertical stresses being applied to it from heavy traffic or rolling loads. This would be like loose laying carpet tile and expecting it to stay in place. Any commercial flooring material, especially vinyl tile and plank should be adhered to the substrate to ensure the integrity of the installation and the product.

Caveat Emptor – Latin for let the buyer beware, applies to the principle that the buyer alone is responsible for checking the quality and suitability of goods before a purchase is made. And don't forget, you get what you pay for. In the case of flooring material, since no one actually analyzes or tests the material before they buy or accept it, except for, believe it or not, the big box stores, you don't know what you're getting or the quality of it. You trust that the seller or pseudo manufacturer, is going to deliver to you quality flooring material that will perform as expected for the purpose of use. We find that this is not always the case. That said, keep in mind that we only see the worst of the worst when it comes to flooring complaints and failures, and that the vast majority of commercial flooring is installed without any complaints or problems. But when they do occur, the seller or manufacturer is never going to just cave and say, you know, you're right, the product is defective and we're going to replace it. They may finally replace the material but you'll fight for the labor which is the most expensive part of the proposition. Normally the claim is turned down for something blamed on the flooring contractor who then has to fight to defend themselves against taking it in the shorts. The recourse, unfortunately, is to threaten or actually take legal action against whoever provided the failed product. These claims have become more contentious.

The responses on denials by manufacturer's have become more ridiculous, with replies that are so absurd and devoid of any knowledge about flooring and its installation, that they make up any nonsense to try and explain away the actual cause of the failure. And it takes more time to educate the ignorance as to what is actually happening and refuting their rebuttals.

Test results and information are sorely mis-understood or not understood at all. And they are often interpreted by the product respondent to fit their position when they have no idea what they're looking at, even when they try to get an explanation. For most of the ASTM tests that apply to flooring there is no pass/fail but a requirement. For



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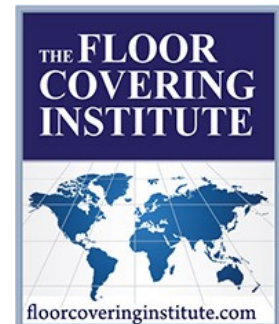
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dimensional stability for example, movement shouldn't exceed 0.020 inch or 0.167% per linear foot. Movement below the requirement, which may show movement in the material, is still movement. If the product is shrinking on the floor and shows some shrinkage in the test but does not exceed the requirement, it's still shrinking. Understand this about the testing, it must be noted that the samples received for testing represent a small portion of the overall product installed on the job site. They may or may not reflect the specific attributes of the concern conditions being exhibited. Testing is conducted according to ASTM or specific test protocols, in a limited time frame and does not replicate job site conditions. So, if a flooring material was installed for six months, for example, before it started to show any signs of it doing hinky things on the floor, testing is not going to necessarily replicate the concern conditions. Anyone who sells the product that thinks that because the lab testing does not reveal what the installed product is doing, doesn't indicate that there isn't a problem with it. They think they've been exonerated. But if the test shows even an inkling of change, as mentioned earlier, that indicates the product is reacting. Also, if the product sent in for testing comes from a job site where there were multiple lots, production dates or other variations, the tested sample taken from an attic stock box may not be afflicted with the concern condition. The real evidence is what's on the floor. Like a dead body, the upright alive guy standing next to the body, isn't afflicted with the condition that killed the one lying dead on the floor.

How's this for an explanation, by a "manufacturer" who isn't, of why a vinyl plank flooring material is failing on a job site.

LVP cupping, lifting, curling, doming and gapping are industry-wide known issues related to the installation of LVP flooring in buildings with uncontrolled environmental conditions as well as installing non porous LVP onto non porous substrate while the adhesive was in a wet or semi wet condition; trapped water in the adhesive will prevent the adhesive from properly drying and curing resulting in distortion of the flooring material. Alone, or in combination with improper acclimation can prevent the adhesive from properly drying and curing resulting in a distortion of the flooring material.

What!? Aside from this statement not making any sense at all, being poorly written, not having any basis in fact, implicating the adhesive in the distortion of the

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flooring material, and being complete BS, it kind of contradicts the hype that these products are waterproof doesn't it? And now you have to be concerned, according to this response, that the adhesive will cause the flooring material to magically change its physical characteristics. That's going to make the adhesive manufacturers real happy. My response to that is, adhesive will not prevent a flooring material from lifting, cupping, doming, gapping or any other physical change, and conversely it won't cause the flooring to do those things either. Nice try Sherlock, but the science doesn't support your response.

This video clip sums up the responses some idiots get to write as rebuttals to the flooring contractors flooring failures.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ec7rCsNFn30&ab_channel=lambojam

If you have questions about a flooring issue, need help with one or have a situation you'd like to share, let us know. We're here to help, and we always have the answers to what went wrong, why, who's at fault and, most important, how to fix it.

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