

CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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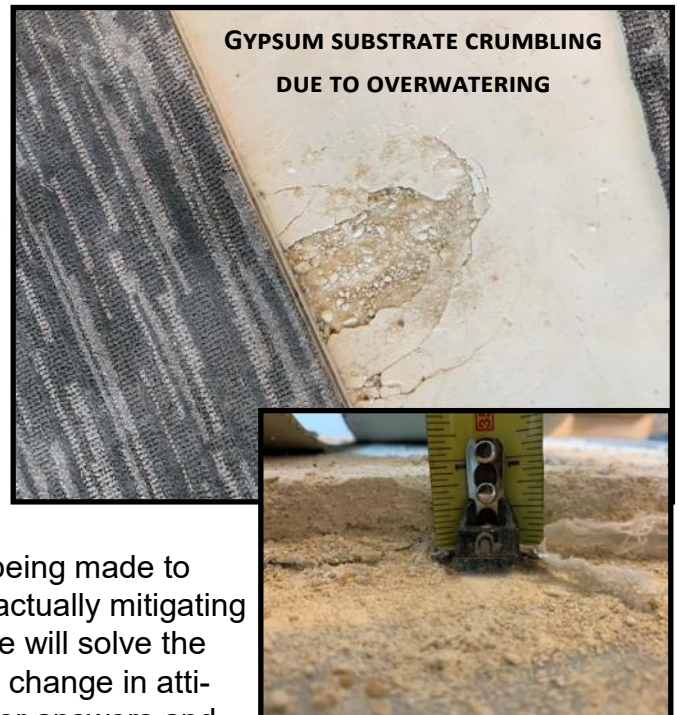
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A Cacophony of Information

Including a Guest Article from Jason Spangler, Wagner Meters—Concrete Moisture Testing Made Easy—See Page 5-6

We're going to look at a variety of issues in this month's newsletter. Things that come up on a regular basis and things that are unique to specific cases we've dealt with. There isn't a day that the exact same flooring issue comes in. Many times, what may be stated as the problem turns out to be something else. The flooring is just the medium that a problem may manifest itself in.

Since the flooring material always visibly manifests a problem, it gets accused of the failure. And because the flooring contractor installed the flooring, they are considered guilty until proven innocent – the flooring contractor is always the first one to get blamed for a flooring failure. For the last several years we have not found that to be the case. This is not to say the flooring contractor doesn't make mistakes but at the commercial level we work at, if the flooring contractor messes up, they're big enough to accept a mistake they made and take care of it. More often we're seeing decisions made by a GC the flooring guys are being forced to accept causing a problem. Like not having any working HVAC in a building and expecting the adhesives and flooring material to be installed contrary to manufacturer's instructions and common sense. Or being made to use an adhesive said to be a moisture mitigator, in lieu of actually mitigating a moisture or substrate issue thinking the magical adhesive will solve the underlying problem. Fortunately, we're beginning to see a change in attitude as we've got more general contractors coming to us for answers and guidance on a project and even help in selecting the appropriate flooring material. Most of this has stemmed from the general contractor, or the end user, having had a problem before that they don't want to have happen again.



Question what's in the manufacturer's information. I can't tell you how many times, working on a case and reviewing all the documents, that we find nuggets of incorrect information buried in information provided that are contradictory to industry standards and practices or to what may have been in the document in the beginning of it. The information in the installation specifications may be what you are expected to follow but you can't always rely on the information being correct. Especially today, with so

much technology and parameters for guidelines to install under, who's the scientist that determines with empirical testing and data, that what you're being told or what the guidelines are, are even correct? For example, an adhesive manufacturer saying to roll a double stick installation with a 75 to 100 pound roller. The roller for a double stick installation should not exceed 50 pounds lest you squeeze all the adhesive out. And wait until you've completed the section and the adhesive has started to set up, and then roll it. And keep traffic off for 24 to 48 hours.

Here's something else. NEVER send the manufacturer product to test if you suspect a problem. Their tests never fail, and you'll never get the true results. There are only a handful of manufacturers with any facility capable of doing any type of testing at all. If you really want to know what's going on with a product, send the product to us and we'll have it tested. Even at that, the tests don't always duplicate what's going on at the installation site. The samples tested only represent a small piece of the entire flooring. The tests are conducted on a short time frame and done according to ASTM or to the test protocol and do not replicate the job site conditions or anything on the job site that may be influencing the concern or contributing to it.

Here's another issue we've run into where there is a dispute over tests we've conducted on a stability issue for a carpet tile. The manufacturer of the carpet tile stated that their internal tolerances for the product varied from the industry standard test for tolerances. Well, you can't have it both ways. Either the product conforms to the industry standard, or it doesn't. You don't get to make up your own rules. Most manufacturers and interested parties are on the committees for the industry standard test so their internal tolerances should be the exact same. You can't make your test different than the test you helped create.



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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Now, speaking of problems and avoiding them, and because the title states we're going to discuss a number of different issues in this month's CFR, let's look at what I will blatantly say is a very stupid idea for an installation system that is being touted extensively. That is installing vinyl tile and plank over an underlayment that is not glued to the substrate. In a commercial installation of flooring material any flooring installed should be firmly affixed to the substrate to ensure it is stable and it performs. There are some exceptions like using tabs to install carpet tile if the carpet tile is beefy enough to be installed that way. I would not suggest installing light weight carpet tiles this way nor would we condone it. But, when it comes to installing vinyl tile or plank over a substrate that floats, there are a number of reasons not to do this. First, vinyl plank and tile, much of which comes from overseas where quality control can be suspect, is not always balanced. These are layered products and unless all the layers are balanced – think of all of them being relaxed the same for

example – one of more of them can be looking to go to a place where they find a point of relaxation. That point may not be in equilibrium with the other layers and create a planar or dimensional stability issue. Planar issues, so you know, would be end or edge lift, cupping, curling, or doming. Dimensional issues would be shrinking on the



ends or sides or expanding. If the material is not glued to a stable platform, such as a concrete substrate, and is glued instead to a floating underlayment, one that is not glued down, both the flooring and the underlayment can be unstable and lift. Or, as we've seen several times, in a building with wood floors where the heat runs are boxed into the joists, the air movement in the runs will escape through the joints in the wood substrate and lift the unadhered underlayment, and the flooring along with it. Not that I would ever suggest that glue will hold down an unstable flooring material, God forbid, it will not, but don't taunt the issue. In a commercial flooring installation, the underlayment and the flooring should both be glued down. You may think it doesn't matter and the flooring manufacturer may

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tell you it's OK but I'm telling you it's not.

Speaking of underlayment, never use what is becoming a universal suggestion, a 6 mil sheet of plastic under a vinyl flooring material. This is often suggested under a floating floor to mitigate moisture. First, again, is never install a floating floor in a commercial application. I've gone into detail about this before. Using 6 mil poly will create more problems than it will prevent. There are perfectly good underlayment materials for use under vinyl flooring, except crumb rubber, that are available that work well. And if you have moisture, which you will in most concrete, there are products that can be topically applied, one in particular that we helped develop, that are very effective and reasonably priced and proven to work, in stopping moisture.

"Stupid is as stupid does" is a line from the movie Forrest Gump. Essentially it means doing something you should know won't work. That would be trying to fix a flooring failure by going back and doing the same thing over again and expecting a different result. Why anyone would think this would work is beyond my comprehension, but we see it happen. On one job in particular, in a 15 story multi-family housing building, where there was a failure of the vinyl plank flooring over an underlayment – both materials failed. The GC, who got into a legal battle with the flooring contractor, had another flooring firm rip up and install new vinyl plank flooring using a different underlayment and flooring material. The underlying issue was with the substrate, which was not corrected, contrary to our recommendation. Apparently, they thought that by replacing the job with different materials the problem would be solved. It won't.

A bit of industry information for you. Growth in the vinyl flooring category is up 30% and in the commercial market vinyl flooring, in all forms, but especially vinyl plank, is gaining strength. It is anticipated that vinyl flooring will surpass carpet next year as the largest category of flooring. A concern I have is that everybody and his brother has jumped into this market. Many of the participants don't make a lick of the flooring themselves but source it and from various locations and producers. This creates suspicion as to the quality, uniformity and integrity of a lot of this stuff. Remember that up to 80% of the vinyl plank and tile flooring is coming from various geographic locations in the far East. Make sure you know what you're getting and who exactly you're buying it from and where it's made. Most of the companies selling it are not making it, they're just sourcing it. Couple this with the lack of technical knowledge about these products by most people in the industry and you have a recipe for disaster.

We never take sides on a project, we're only interested in the truth as to what went wrong, why, who's at fault and, most importantly, how do you fix it. No one retains our services because they expect us to tell them what they want to hear. You'll have to go someplace else if that's what you're looking for. Fortunately, our client base knows of our reputation and expects to hear the truth from us without any sugar coating or guess work.

If you have questions, problems, or concerns that you need help with or want to discuss, call us. We always have the honest answers.

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Concrete Moisture Testing Made Easy

Are you ready to make testing for moisture in concrete floor slabs as quick and easy as possible? Are you tired of creating handwritten notes for all your moisture readings? Have you ever made mistakes while transcribing your moisture data by hand, or even lost your data altogether?

If you answered yes to any of these questions, then it's time to start using the DataMaster L6 app. It provides convenient, error-free, digital storage of your data directly on your smart device.

Best of all, the easy-to-use app integrates seamlessly with the [Rapid RH L6](#) system by Wagner Meters for fast, accurate relative humidity (RH) testing of concrete moisture.

Why Use the Rapid RH L6 System?

The Rapid RH L6 System uses the RH test method, which is scientifically proven as the most reliable method for assessing when the concrete slab is dry enough for the installation of the finished floor. After all, who wants to risk a costly, moisture-related flooring disaster?

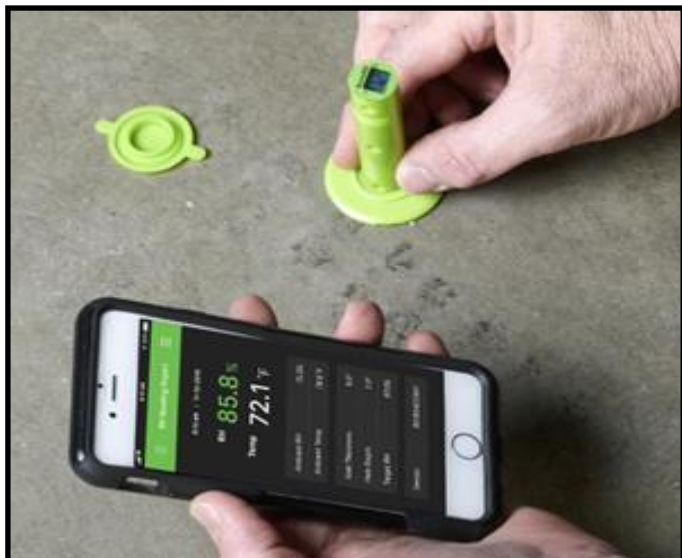


Plus, the Rapid RH L6 is a complete system that's got you covered at every step: drilling your test holes, taking moisture readings, and keeping your moisture data securely stored.

The system includes highly advanced and accurate RH sensors (called L6 Smart Sensors) that capture time-stamped moisture readings. These sensors can be paired with the system's all-new L6 DataGrabber accessory devices that you can quickly and easily program for automated readings at set intervals.

Finally, the system includes a reader device (called the Total Reader) that displays the current reading. This reader can be used to transfer your RH moisture test data wirelessly to the DataMaster L6 app.

The award-winning Rapid RH L6 system uses the scientifically proven and reliable RH test method.



What is the DataMaster App?

It's a free, multi-purpose app for reading, recording, and reporting the RH test data you collect using Rapid RH L6 sensors. The DataMaster L6 app takes advantage of an unbroken stream of data to give you the highest level of data integrity.

All readings get stored in the app and can be downloaded to PDF reports. You're assured of reporting concrete moisture data that are 100% consistent with your original readings—no more transcription errors, no more lost papers, no more smudges or coffee stains, and no more trouble trying to decipher what was written by hand.

The DataMaster app is robust, with plenty of features to make concrete RH testing as easy as possible.

The DataMaster L6 app provides error-free, wireless transfer of your concrete moisture data to your mobile device.

Here are just some of the things this app can do for you:

- Capture, assemble, and email all data necessary to adhere to the ASTM F2170 standard.
- Link all recorded data to your job site's sensor locations with a mapping function.
- Add photos, audio memos, and text notes to your job info.
- View data in user-friendly graphs and change settings to view different time frames.
- Print reports directly from your smart device.
- Connect wirelessly, via Bluetooth, with any DataGrabber device to download RH data and easily program your device for automated readings.

You can even use the DataMaster L6 app to update the firmware of the L6 Total Reader. This is a feature many people using the Rapid RH L6 system don't know about, and it's yet another valuable reason to be using the app.

The DataMaster App is a Key Part of the Rapid RH L6 System

If you're already using Rapid RH L6 sensors, then we highly recommend that you download the app. It's free, and it's available in versions for both iOS and Android devices.

You'll save time and money and avoid unnecessary headaches. Your RH data will be effortlessly at your fingertips, and if there's ever a need to update your sensor firmware, the app will have you covered.

By using every element in the award-winning Rapid RH L6 system, including the DataMaster L6 app, you'll make your concrete moisture testing easier and faster than ever.

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Author: Jason Spangler—Wagner Meters' Sales Manager

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