

# CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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## They Giveth and They Taketh Away

We're talking about warranties here, most of which aren't worth the paper they're written on. Whatever they give you in the first paragraph, they take away in the next three. This is nothing new, as it's always been this way. I was writing about this subject back in the 80's when I had a regular column in Floor Covering News called The Claims File. And just what is it that the warranties cover? This has become a bigger issue with vinyl flooring sold by people who don't make it, source it from a variety of OEM manufacturers, aren't involved in quality control, have no idea what's in it, and in some cases, could care less. They'll just copy and paste a warranty they find and like, maybe make a few adjustments, and then try to hang you out to dry with what it says if the product starts reacting like jumping beans on the floor – all on its unstable own.

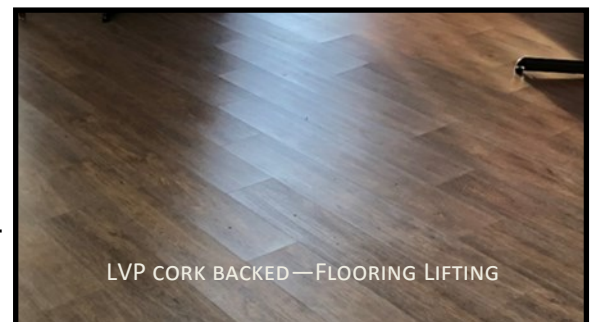
These issues don't stop with the warranties. The information on the spec sheet and sales information often tells you one thing and the installation instructions tell you another. They are contradictory, confusing, entrapping and often ridiculous.

I've given you some examples here of what we're talking about. One flooring manufacturer warrants its Stone Core Vinyl product to be free from manufacturing defects at a specified length of time from the date of purchase as set forth above. That time is never specified. What the hell does this mean! That at some point the product can go bad and its OK?

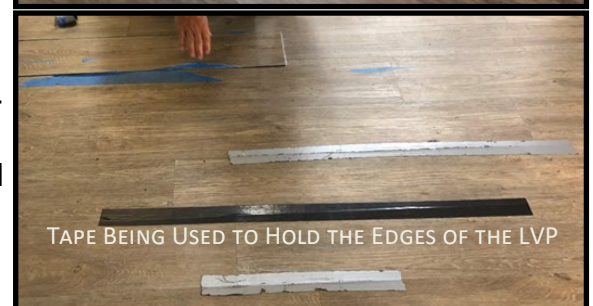
A sustainability manager at a manufacturer stated, "There are no 'regulatory' standards that apply specifically to rigid core, however, there are industry standards that are applicable such as ASTM F3261, Standard Specification for Resilient Flooring in Modular Format with Rigid Polymeric Core. This standard provides the standard specification for rigid core such as wear layer thickness, light stability and dimension stability." This manager stated that manufacturer of the flooring has developed its own internal standards that exceed those of ASTM requirements to ensure high quality products.



BOX OF ATTIC STOCK OPENED REVEALING DAMAGE TO CORNERS OF FLOORING AND PLAIN WHITE BOX



LVP CORK BACKED—FLOORING LIFTING



TAPE BEING USED TO HOLD THE EDGES OF THE LVP

They went on to say, "As this is a category that continues to innovate, new standards are always in discussion, to consider new technologies. However, changes to existing standards typically require a quorum of manufacturers to agree. Currently, there are no active discussions to change or adjust the current standard for rigid flooring."

Let me inform you that there are no regulatory tests for any type of flooring performance. Regulations only cover fire and chemical safety. The F3261 covers performance and sets a precedent for said performance. As for manufacturers or pseudo manufacturers setting their own standards, we are aware of how that works. Take ASTM F2199 for example. This is the Standard Test Method for Determining Dimensional Stability of Resilient Floor Tile after Exposure to Heat. This test method covers the determination of the change in linear dimensions of resilient floor tile after exposure to heat. ASTM F2199 has been conducted at 80C for the last decade but the F3261 now calls for lowering the temperature to 70C. How is that more stringent? Or maybe it was because the material would not pass the regular written and approved test? So, if the product doesn't comply, let's adjust the test to make it fit. Not the first time this has happened. This is why you don't let the fox guard the henhouse.

It is also a faux pas that a "quorum of manufacturers has to agree". It should state a quorum of ASTM committee members. So, it's only the manufacturers that get to set their own standards and not industry experts with the manufacturers? That's kind of lopsided.

Note that LVT and LVP products have no truly applicable ASTM standards – ASTM F-1700 (SVT) and F-1066 (VCT) are often quoted claiming these products conform to these standards but manufacturers have adopted these standards because they are all that exists for testing vinyl tile products.

So much of this is a game, but we know how to play it, and we're really, really, good at it. We are not the guys you want sitting on the other side of the table. Our team is amazingly intelligent in every flooring category, from concrete to carpet, including testing, and we oversee every test and evaluate any material sent into us, after the testing, to re-evaluate it because it can and will change and most often does.



## **THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT**

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Page Layout By: Anita S. Drennon

As the industry evolves and new products are brought to the marketplace, such as vinyl floor tile and plank with a magnesium oxide core (MgO), an industry spokesman said that waiting to see how a product performs over time is crucial. What does that mean? That the flooring contractor or installer is the guinea pig and if there's a problem, they'll blame you first? This would conform to the Shoot, Ready, Aim principle of product performance and testing – what it actually does in the field by the test subjects who install the products - that would be you, the flooring contractor, general contractor and also the architect, specifier or other commercial flooring entity - to see if it actually works. This is nothing new in the flooring industry as we've often had products sold this way.

One of the most famous, and most successful, but problematic, was Stainmaster. Pure marketing genius, but an initial pain in the patoot for the flooring manufacturers. Two reasons stand out. There was so much effluent being dumped into the water handling system of Dalton that the industry was almost shut down by the EPA as a result, and carpet products were turning yellow on the storage racks at the mills before they were shipped. A boom and fiasco both to the carpet industry. On top of that advertising on TV showed a kid in a high chair drop a piece of chocolate cake that jumped back into his plate. This gave the impression to the consuming public that the carpet would reject anything dropped on it – it didn't. In addition, the powers that be behind this technology, all of whom were highly alphabetically credentialed, came up with the idea that Wisk, the laundry pre-soak, was a great way to spot clean the carpet. What it did was leave a heavy residue that attracted soil and turned the carpet black. Back then I was working with these guys on this issue and was astounded they came up with this idea for cleaning. I'm an idiot by comparison but knew this was a fiasco. One house we went to look at because the carpet had turned black from soil, the consumer had used 7 bottles of Wisk to try and get the carpet clean. If there was ever a fire at this house all the firemen would have to do was soak the carpet and the suds would have enveloped the entire space putting out the fire. This is a tip for you, take everything with a grain of salt, trust but verify and don't believe everything you read or hear, much of it is Bullshit. A technical term I use frequently.



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\*\*You can see in the pictures on page 1 that the installed product clearly exhibits lifting and planar instability. However the ASTM F3261 lab test results indicate no issues with the product. In this case you have to believe what you see and not what you read. The testing is done according to the ASTM protocol but reveals none of the clearly apparent issues of the installed product.

<b>TEST METHOD CONDUCTED</b>	ISO 23999 Standard Specification for Resilient Flooring in Modular Format with Rigid Polymeric Core Modified Per ASTM F3261			
<b>TEST RESULTS</b>				
<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	<b>TEMPERATURE</b>	<b>RESULT</b>	<b>INITIAL CURL</b>	<b>FINAL CURL</b>
Length mean	70° C	- .14 mm (.05 %)	0.0 mm	0.2 mm
Width mean	70° C	- .05 mm (.03 %)		
<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	<b>TEMPERATURE</b>	<b>RESULT</b>	<b>INITIAL CURL</b>	<b>FINAL CURL</b>
Length mean	70° C	- .11 mm (.04 %)	0.0 mm	0.3 mm
Width mean	70° C	- .08 mm (.04 %)		
<b>IDENTIFICATION</b>	<b>TEMPERATURE</b>	<b>RESULT</b>	<b>INITIAL CURL</b>	<b>FINAL CURL</b>
Length mean	70° C	- .14 mm (.05 %)	0.0 mm	0.2 mm
Width mean	70° C	- .04 mm (.02 %)		



Here's a couple of interesting responses to claims we've worked on lately. I love this stuff. They get so creative. Ignorantly so, but it keeps us fascinated.

***A response to a claim on a rubber flooring product from the manufacturer:***

“When environmental conditions are not controlled during construction, the flooring is allowed to contract and expand while construction traffic and rolling loads are applied thus causing breakdown of contaminants under the adhesive.”

Does this make any sense to you? What does it even mean? And, by the way this product was defective for six different reasons, none of them having to do with environmental conditions.

***And another one:***

“Regarding your inquiry into our Technical Services reports and testing results, we do not share the data and information with parties outside our organization. Technical Services reports are confidential. Our testing methods and results are made in accordance to (sic) ASTM F1700 specification and are under copyright, therefore, we are legally unable to share those details. Further information regarding the testing methods and tolerances may be obtained from ASTM directly.” Copyright? Really? A copyright has to be registered and it does not mean it can't be shared, it just can't be copied without the authors permission. Test methods employed and results are not copyrighted. The test methods are what they are, and the results are as well. What's to copyright? What is true is that the ASTM methods are copyrighted and cannot be freely shared, but you can buy them. However, the test results from the tests conducted are not copyrighted and can be freely shared.

**NOTE:**

This issue keeps coming up and I'm going to pound on it until, hopefully, this myth gets dispelled. ***Flooring adhesive will not, is not supposed to, nor can it, overcome any dimensional or planar stress in any flooring material.*** This would be like saying flooring adhesive can hold a compressed coil spring in place. Not going to happen. The stress wins every time, it may take a while, but it always wins. If anyone tells you otherwise hit them with something, maybe they'll get the message then.

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