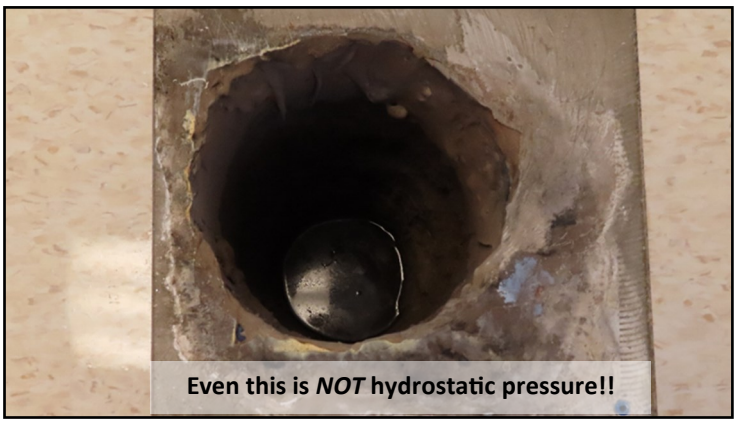
CFR The Commercial Flooring Report
For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry
Volume 176 - May 2023
Click here to View and Download all CFR Newsletters

Shedding Light on Myths and Absurdities

It amazes me the amount of disinformation and pure unadulterated bull shit that is spewed from the mouths and marketing information of firms providing flooring materials and ancillary products associated with them. We're going to go through a short list of some of the most ridiculous myths and absurdities being perpetrated without any basis in fact, science, and reality.


Even this is *NOT* hydrostatic pressure!!

The first one is hydrostatic pressure. Said by almost every manufacturer of flooring material, topical treatments, adhesives, membranes, and anything else that goes down on top of a concrete substrate. Hydrostatic pressure is used as an excuse for all types of flooring installation failures or at least espoused as being a looming threat to the flooring and the installations failure. First, I'll state that rarely if ever is there a commercial flooring failure ever associated with hydrostatic pressure. Let's dissect the word. "Hydro" comes from the Greek word for water. "Static" is static load, also called a fixed load. Think of it as a constant force pushing, under pressure, against an object or a surface. It is a constant and does not vary over time. To consider a load to be static, it must have a magnitude, direction, and location that do not change. Do you think that this is what's happening beneath a concrete slab? It is not. This term is misused and misunderstood. There would have to be a constant pressure of water pushing against the base of the concrete, which does not happen. Well, it does when you have a basement built below a water table and the force of the water that is constantly pushing against the basement walls. We're not talking about a dam here; we're talking about a concrete slab. The moisture coming out of it is moisture vapor which will condense to a liquid when it meets the non-permeable flooring material installed on the surface of the concrete. The people who use this term would have you believe that at any moment a geyser is going to erupt from beneath the concrete which is never going to happen. So, if anyone wants to tell you that a flooring failure being experienced is due to hydrostatic pressure contact us. We have experts that will dispel that myth in a heartbeat. It's an excuse that everyone and his brother is using in their installation guidelines and it's a lie.

Another one of my favorites, and I've mentioned this before, but this crap excuse is constantly perpetuated, relative to edge lift on modular flooring, but especially carpet tile. "The edges are lifting because the carpet tile is fitted too tight." Think about this for a minute. To fit the material together too tight requires the installer actually push the tiles together with force. Next the tiles would have to slide to do so. The pressure sensitive adhesive used to install the tiles grabs the backing, it does not allow the tiles to slide, which is what it does and is designed to do. The carpet tiles have to be placed down. Rather than trying to visualize this, try doing it to see how difficult it is to force the edges together and make them lift or curl and you'll see how absurd this lame excuse for edge lift on a carpet tile is. We did this at the lab to prove a point, and it took two of us to push the tiles together with enough force to make them lift. Add adhesive and it's virtually impossible. And, let me add, that if the installer actually was capable of causing this condition it would occur immediately, not days, weeks or months later as it normally does. You don't have to think scientifically to figure this out, just apply some common sense. This is strictly a product planar stability issue having nothing to do with installation. And if you disagree, show me the proof. So, stop using this as an excuse.

Here's one I just read this weekend in one of the trade magazines, which by the way you should all be reading, and reading between the lines, so you know what's going on in the industry, who's saying what about whatever product, and to get to experience something like our next myth.

The statement about this product I'm referring to is that it is PVC free with no plasticizers. But, further along the literature states that it has 60% post consumer plastic content. Wait. Did you just say no PVC and no plasticizers? What do you think is in the recycled stuff you're putting in your product which you have pictures of? Did you think we'd miss the part that you use no PVC or additional plasticizer that you intentionally put in, but what about the recycled content being used in the finished product? And, by the way, in order to make any flooring material flexible to any extent it has to contain some kind of plasticizer to facilitate this.

Another one that I love is that our product is good up to 85,90, 95, 99 or whatever RH – what does this mean? Do you know what you're talking about with these numbers? First of all, every concrete slab flooring is installed on is different. There are no two alike anywhere. In fact, the pour from every truck varies and the conditions of the slab will vary in the same building. So, you can have areas of the same concrete slab that are different in the same building. And are these stated RH numbers before the flooring is installed? Of course they are. You're not going to

THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

Lewis G. Migliore—President

P: 706.370.5888 or Email: lgmtcs@optilink.us

Just Click Here to Go to Our Website for All CFR Articles

LGMANDASSOCIATES.COM

be testing after the flooring is installed and that's when the failures occur. The tests are not predictive. They are a snap shot of the moment in the spot in which they are taken. After the flooring is installed and the facility is in use all bets are off. The statement that, "we did the tests, and they were all within the limits of the - take your pick – adhesive, flooring, membrane, topical treatment or whatever." But conditions do, can, and will change after the flooring is installed. You're going to chastise me here, but I don't care what the RH test numbers say. They're telling you what the RH is. I want to know what the moisture reading is – that would be the true indication of moisture in the concrete and that you do with a Tramex meter. Another visual test you can use. Get the Concrete Moisture Encounter meter and place it against the palm of your hand and watch the needle peg. Humans are mostly water, the meter measures that wet stuff. Now place it on the concrete and see what the meter reads. If it reads over three you have a condition which requires some type of moisture mitigation. Also, if you have a doubting General Contractor who questions your balking at installing the flooring, you can show him how the meter works on your hand, in fact do it on theirs, and then test the substrate. This will dispel the arguments. I'm a marketing guy with a technical firm. The saying in marketing is, "if they can see it, you can sell it". If they can see how the test actually shows that you have moisture you can't argue with that science. And this is a legitimate ASTM test - 2659. I've been using one of these meters for years and swear by it. By the way, I have nothing to do with Tramex and get nothing for sharing this information with you.

Next we have this:

This information is rather typical in installation guidelines but how are you supposed to know most of this stuff? You can't and you wouldn't as a commercial flooring contractor or installer

1) The slab must be of good quality, standard density concrete with low water/cement ratios consistent with placing and finishing requirements, having a maximum slump of 4", a minimum compressive strength of 3000 psi, and following the recommendations of ACI Standard 302.1R for Class 2 or Class 4 floors and the Portland Cement Association's recommendations for slabs on ground.

Wow! You have to start with getting the concrete mix design and interpret that, which you won't because it will be foreign language to you unless you are a concrete specialist. Then you have to get the batch tickets from every truck load. Then you have to get the slump test results from the job site concrete and there may be test slump tests prior to that at the batch plant. This is just for starters. You'd have to understand what all this means and if it would compromise your installation. This is not your job. This is something the GC has to be aware of. We get into this stuff after there is a failure or if we're consulting on a project, to insure there won't be a failure.

2) The concrete slab must be dry, clean, smooth, structurally sound, and free of foreign materials that might prevent adhesive bond as described in the current edition of ASTM F710, Standard Practice for Preparing Concrete Floors to Receive Resilient Flooring.

Some of these you'll be able to see, some you won't. And if you ask which you should, how do you know what was used and the effect it may have on the flooring installation. How do you know you're being told the truth?

3) The concrete slab must be protected from ground moisture with an effective and intact vapor retarder that conforms to the requirements of the current edition of ASTM E1745, "Standard Specification for Water Vapor Retarders Used in Contact with Soil or Granular Fill Under Concrete Slabs."

Old slabs aren't going to have a vapor retarder, or they may have one that is thin and degraded. Or they may have used a vapor retarder, told you they did and that it was placed correctly when it actually may not have been. We just had a failure like this. The GC insisted they used a vapor barrier that was properly placed. It wasn't. There were pictures and there was a schematic from the Architect that had the vapor barrier placed under the fill. Can't argue with all that irrefutable evidence as proof.

4) The concrete slab must be placed directly on the vapor retarder.

See number 3.

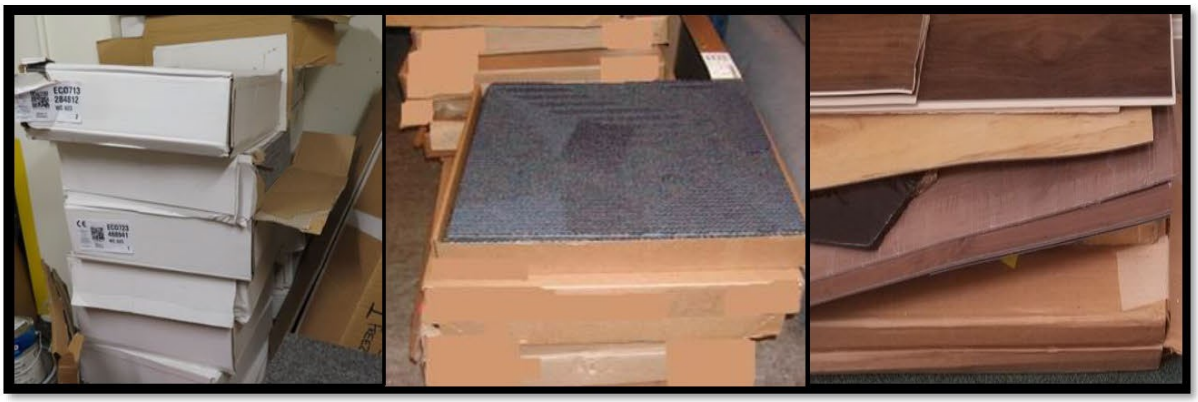
5) The concrete must be wet cured with a moisture-retaining curing cover. Do not use spray-on curing compounds because these reduce the drying rate of concrete and can interfere with the adhesive bond.

And, again, how are you going to know this and what effect it may have on your flooring material or installation. And why is this information in the manufacturer's installation guidelines. None of you are concrete experts with flooring experience, unless you actually are, and you can count them on one hand - three of them are associated with LGM.

There is so much more but we'll save that for future issues. Hopefully we haven't scared the daylights out of you enough that you'll want to get into another line of work. But let's put some soothing perspective on this. Almost all flooring gets installed without any problems. The percentages of failures for any reason are in the low single digits. The biggest of the commercial flooring failures usually find their way to LGM. If one of them ever befalls you, or you have a concern ahead of time, or a question of any kind, you can come to us for help and an answer. We always have an objective, unbiased, independent and honest answer. It's what we do, all day, every day, all over the country and out of it. As one manufacturer said several years ago, "LGM are not the guys you want sitting on the other side of the table."

Overstock FLOORZ

Looking to Buy Large Lots of Carpet Tile Plus We Pay Freight



Turn Old Inventory Into Cash!!!

Call Us – We Will Pay You and Arrange Shipping from Your Location

Kolt Privett - 770-530-4709

Overstock Floorz - koltp.of@gmail.com

We Prefer No Carpet Remnants, Right Now. We are Currently Looking for Large Carpet Tile Lots – 150 Yards and Above - We Pay the Freight

402 Beamer Road SW, Calhoun, GA 30701