

Recent Flooring Failures

LGM and Associates, with over 5 decades of experience, located in Dalton, Georgia, The Flooring Capital of the World, is an elite team of leading experts in all facets of the flooring industry, dealing with a multitude of floor covering problems including, but not limited to,

- ⇒ **FLOORING FAILURES ANALYSIS**
- ⇒ **ON-SITE PHYSICAL INSPECTION**
- ⇒ **GUIDANCE AND CONSULTING ON ALL FLOORING MATERIALS**
- ⇒ **SUBSTRATES**
- ⇒ **CONCRETE AND**
- ⇒ **MOISTURE ISSUES**



Every day brings a new challenge. Some situations involve product failures that span the country that reveal a product defect that the individual flooring contractor or general contractor are being told they're the only ones with the problem. In fact it's really a systemic product failure.

In many situations the problem is blamed on installation when installation has no bearing on the flooring failure. This is truer today than ever with the myriad of new products hitting the market that there is no track record for and with marketing claims that are beyond reality.

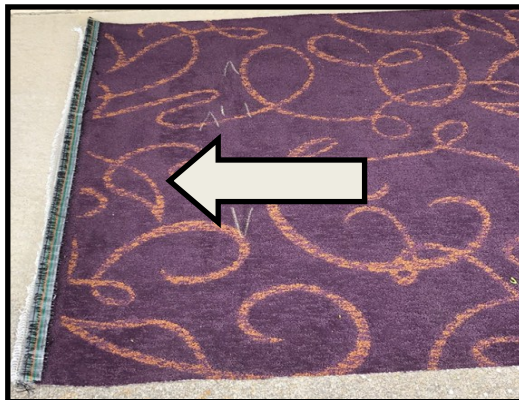
It's interesting talking to manufacturers technical people who may advise sales and marketing not to do or say something about a new product to no avail. Sales trumps everything, including reality.

Let's look at some of the more recent projects we've been involved in.

A carpet installer was faulted for inserting small fill pieces into several recessed doorways in a hospitality installation. The corridor was a bit over 6 feet wide, the carpet ordered was 12 feet wide. Being that this was a patterned carpet, with an attached cushion back with selvedge edges that had to be trimmed, it was not going to fall into the recessed doorways. This necessitated fill pieces having to be inserted. Now the pattern in this carpet was very busy, random and allowing the fill pieces to be installed with virtually no mismatch. In fact, if you weren't looking for the fill pieces specifically with an eye for the fill, no one would have noticed them. The fact that the carpet has an attached back, which greatly improves its structural integrity, and was glued directly to the concrete substrate and the seams sealed, guaranteed the fill pieces weren't going anywhere. So, the fill pieces were virtually invisible to the naked eye, the carpet was of very high quality and properly installed, yet the installer was faulted for the complaint condition. Someone without the knowledge of tufted commercial carpet that comes with a selvedge edge ordered a product that was 12 feet wide to fit into corridors with door drops that added more width than the carpet could accommodate.

What should have been done is to let the flooring contractor look at the job and measure the layout so that the appropriate carpet width could be ordered. 12 foot goods with a selvedge edge are never going to be 12 feet wide. We measured attic stock carpet and the width was 11' 11". After trimming the selvedge and cutting into the fully laminated material the carpet was 11' 10".

Splitting the carpet down the middle to fit into a 6 foot wide corridor was never going to work. You aren't going to stretch a patterned carpet with an attached cushion back several inches to fit into a door drop. The only way to accomplish this is to put fill pieces in. Whoever ordered the carpet never figured this in and didn't understand carpet. You should know that just because you order 12 foot wide goods doesn't mean you're going to get 12 foot wide carpet. There is no industry standard for carpet width. It requires knowing how these carpets are made, understanding the product and the process, and having someone with experience figure out the job layout and ordering the carpet based on that. Ordering carpet



EXAMPLE OF SELVEDGE EDGE ON PATTERNED CARPET



THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT

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you think is going to work when it won't is not the flooring guys fault. The corridor should have been measured from side to side at the widest point and, in this case, a wider width carpet should have been ordered to eliminate the need for fill pieces. The fault here lies with someone without knowledge and experience in patterned commercial carpet being allowed to specify something that wasn't going to work from the outset. The specifier, architect or end user should involve the flooring contractor to do the measuring lest there be a problem you can't fix. This was an issue that could have easily been avoided.

Several thousand feet of a sheet goods installation were failing at the seams suffering from edge curl and shrinking. The product had been stored in Conex containers (metal shipping containers) for several years. It was determined, without any real proof, that the product was still useable, so the decision was made to install it. Not long after being installed the product started to exhibit lifting and shrinkage at the seams. Storing flooring material for extended periods of time, in a metal container subjected to changes in temperature, is certainly going to have an effect on the integrity of the flooring. Since this product was made using heat and chemicals, storing it for a long period of time in what essentially was an oven, altered the product. When we test sheet flooring materials in the lab they are exposed to heat, changes in temperature or humidity for short periods of time, based on the test protocols, to see how they react. Storing these products where these conditions will continuously affect them and then thinking they haven't been changed is ludicrous. We've seen this happen a few times, even with carpet, especially in areas where it gets extremely hot and humid in the summer. If the project is ongoing and materials must be stored in a metal container it should only be for a short period of time and should be brought into the installation space and allowed to acclimate before it is installed. Otherwise, it's going to react on the floor. At that point there is no recourse but to replace it. Installing any flooring material, other than stone, knowing it could have been compromised during storage and not voicing concern will create a contentious situation if there is a failure. Best to store the product in a warehouse with controlled HVAC. The product in this case should not have been installed.

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Let's use this as a comparison. Naval aviators are taught to pause, assess, and act with purpose in the chaos of an emergency. Fast reactions can result in unmanageable situations and turn a manageable issue into a crisis. The same is true of a flooring installation. A quick decision to get the flooring installed under what you think is a compromising situation can create a failure that will result in a crisis. It always helps to know about the products you are working with and how they are made to prevent a problem that you may have caused. Here's where we ask the questions: what went wrong and why, who's at fault and how do you fix it. You might also want to heed what your gut tells you.

Again, with the floating floors in commercial installations. This is an issue we continue to hear about and get questions on. Floating vinyl plank floors have no business being installed in a commercial installation. The engagement system will crack and break as well as the flooring itself if it flexes at all because it has a rigid core. There is no industry standard for this. Any flexing from traffic flow, rolling chairs or carts of any kind can and will break the product. Only flexible glue down flooring should be used in commercial installations. Installing a floating floor may sound like a good idea to the architect, end user or even the installation contractor because it's easy to install, faster than glueing a flooring down, may seem to cover an underlying substrate issue or be less expensive but it's an accident waiting to happen.

Remember that just because someone says something will work doesn't mean it will. Heed this, words do not change the laws of science, physics or chemistry. If you want to avoid flooring failures, put the right product in the right place that will work.

If you have questions, need help on a flooring issue or want to avoid a flooring failure, contact us. We always have the answer.

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If you need help, have a question, aren't sure of a situation you're in, want to avoid a problem, or need guidance on a project or product, contact us. We always have the answers, always. It's what we do, from the substrate to what goes on it.

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