



The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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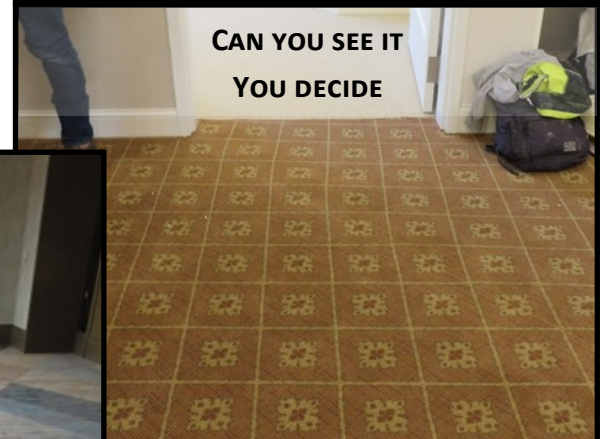
Hospitality Carpet Issues

We do quite a bit of hospitality work around the country involving complaints about spots, stains, soiling, color loss, shedding of wool carpet, pattern match or distortion issues, installation issues and rarely now, pile reversal and watermarking.

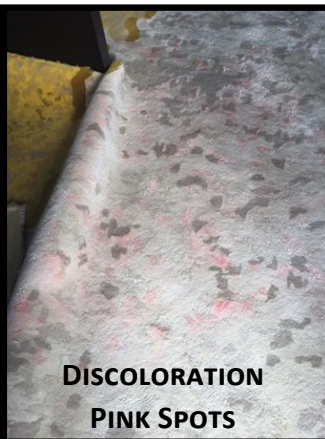
The hospitality market is unique in that it is segmented into individual categories. They can include Luxury, Upper Upscale, Upscale, Upper Midscale, Midscale, and Economy. Or in another way, from five to one star. Hotel star ratings typically range from one to five stars, with higher numbers indicating increased luxury, amenities, and service quality. One-star hotels offer basic, no-frills accommodation, while five-star properties provide premium luxury experiences with comprehensive amenities and personalized service.



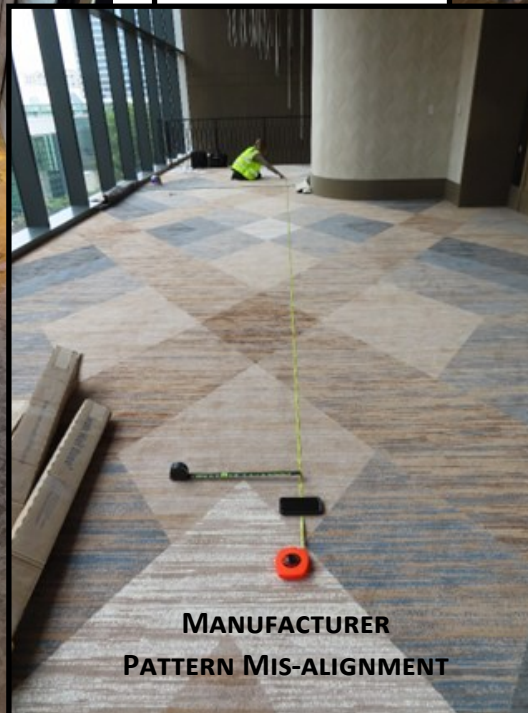
COLOR LOSS—FADING



**CAN YOU SEE IT
YOU DECIDE**



**DISCOLORATION
PINK SPOTS**



**MANUFACTURER
PATTERN MIS-ALIGNMENT**



SPOTS AND STAINING

In addition, there are hotels that offer an exceptional level of luxury that stand alone. Examples of five star hotels are, Four Seasons, St. Regis, and Ritz Carlton. Examples of one star hotels are Super 8, Econolodge, Motel 6 and Red Carpet Inn. All these categories offer different amenities from very luxurious to basic lodging. All of them also fit into a category of flooring material. The rooms in 1 star hotels are more likely to have hard surface vinyl plank flooring. The rooms in 5 star hotels will have a better grade wall to wall carpet in the rooms. More often woven Axminster carpets will cover the corridors and certainly the ballrooms and Prefunction spaces of 5 star hotels. Lower categories can vary from tufted or printed patterns, carpet tile and vinyl flooring. Think of a Rolls Royce versus Nissan Versa to put some perspective on this.



*Couristan Carpet—Axminster Carpet
Hilton Fort Lauderdale Marina*

Almost all hospitality carpets have some kind of pattern. Whether it is a unique bespoke woven Axminster carpet pattern created specifically for a high end hotel or patterned carpet tile or a running line tufted or printed broadloom carpet used in three star or lower properties. Whatever it may be, the products fit into the hospitality sector of the flooring industry. This is a unique market. If you've ever been to the Hospitality Design Show in Las Vegas you'd know that this is where all the pretty people and beautifully designed products are shown. As it's called F F and E – Furniture, Fixtures and Equipment, and all flooring falls into this category.

The carpet for high end hospitality isn't just floor covering but art, especially with woven carpet products with their extraordinary, one of a kind patterns. Unless the installers are experienced with these types of products you can expect challenges and potential problems.

The higher end hotel carpets will require very skilled and experienced installers who have all the right tools needed to work with these products. After all, they are basically installing flooring art. As opposed to dropping in carpet tile and vinyl plank flooring in a lower end hotel property.

We started off mentioning some of the issues with hospitality carpets. First would be soil, spots and stains. Soil would be that which is tracked



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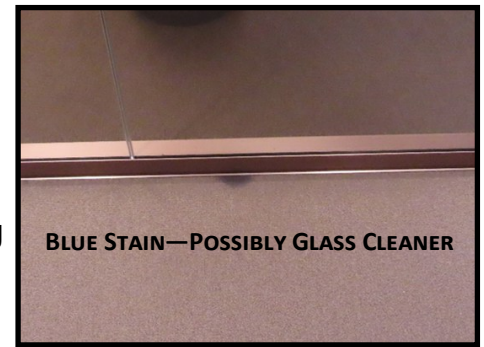
*"When No One Else has Answers,
We Do"*

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Page Layout By: Anita S. Drennon

in from outside and deposited on the flooring or from traffic coming from the kitchens onto the carpets. A spot, would be caused by a substance that fell onto or contacted it, leaving a soil attractive residue. Examples would be soft drinks, greasy or oily food stuffs. A stain is a substance that actually imparts a different color, or removes color from the carpet. Examples would be black coffee, colored drinks or bleaching or oxidizing agents which strip color from the carpet. A spot is not a stain, and a stain is not a spot. The two are often confused. Spots can be cleaned out or off of the flooring. Stains are permanent and the only way to get them out completely is with a knife.



For the hard surface flooring issues, and we'll stick with vinyl plank and tile, the same problems some of these products pose wherever they're used applies to hospitality. Shrinking would be number one, then end or edge lift, cupping, curling or doming. Issues due to inherent dimensional or planar instability of the product relative to manufacturing.

Carpet tile would fall into the spots and soiling categories. Carpet tile is made with solution dyed fiber, so it is impervious for the most part to staining. Curling or edge lifting may occur and this would be a planar stability issue – an inherent defect in the product.

Getting to the patterned carpets and distortions in the pattern on tufted goods due to bow, skew or waver created during the manufacturing process. Exceptional and experienced installers can work with these issues and, unless they are extreme, straighten any inconsistencies in the patterns. An inexperienced installation crew working with patterned carpet can make a bad situation worse, screwing up the entire job when they don't have the skills or proper tools for working with these products.

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Installing woven goods, 80/20 Axminster's, is almost an art form as most often these are one of a kind products from manufacturers such as Couristan, Brintons, Ulster, Innovative and a handful of others. These carpets are manufactured to fit the floor plan of the space where they are going to be installed. They require the highest level of expertise in installing carpets and specialized tools to work with them. We have two firms we work with that we have sent in and out of the country to install these types of carpets or take over an installation that was going sideways due to inexperienced installers.



EXAMPLE OF PROPER INSTALLATION TOOLS



EXPERIENCED INSTALLERS WORKING THE PATTERN

One of the issues that has cropped up lately in some high end hotels and a convention center is with 80/20 (80% wool and 20% nylon) woven Axminster carpet fiber shedding and fuzzing. This usually consists of small balls of fiber gathering on the surface of the carpet. Since wool comes from sheep, the fiber is only so long and therefore it is inherently a staple (short lengths of fiber). The wool is blended with nylon which enhances the yarn's performance. In a 9 or 10 row Ax carpet there's a lot of yarn and the fiber naturally sheds. This condition is normal. With use and proper vacuuming the condition will subside but there may always be some fiber shedding, that's just what the carpet does. However, if it starts out with high volumes of shedding fiber the end user freaks and thinks the carpet is defective. What we often find is that these carpets are not being properly maintained and that the wrong type of vacuum cleaner is being used which will actually exacerbate the shedding. An aggressive vacuum cleaner is like a harvester on a woven carpet.



FUZZ BALL ON WOVEN CARPET



Vacuum used on Woven Carpet

Another issue with 80/20 Axminster carpet is the wool fiber. It will absorb about 30% of its weight in water. Any liquid spilled on it will be absorbed. If the spill is acid based, such as wine, coffee or any colored drink, and food stuffs, the wool, which is dyed with acid based dyes, will absorb the colorant. If not cleaned up immediately the spill now becomes a stain (remember we mentioned this previously in this issue) and is permanent. This is why the busier the pattern in the carpet the better it will hide substances that can dye it.



Another issue is putting the wrong carpet in the wrong place. A recent complaint was for the carpet in the member lounge/bar area of a high end facility uglying out. Turns out the carpet was a woven cut pile singles polypropylene yarn with a very high luster. A very beautiful carpet that should have been in a bedroom and not subject to hundreds of people gathering on it. Polypropylene is the least resilient fiber for use in carpet. As a singles yarn, which means the yarn has no twist, it is particularly susceptible to matting and crushing, even though it was a very dense construction. The designer thought it was beautiful, as did the end user. There was no doubt about that. However, it wasn't practical and was doomed to fail right out of the gate. A prime example of putting the wrong product in the wrong place. This was a specification problem.

The last issue is watermarking, pooling and pile reversal. This condition, for which there is no known cause or cure, gets its name from the physical appearance it creates in high end, cut pile carpet. It is the vertical reorientation of the carpet yarns. We know what happens but not why it happens. We also know how to prevent it. In the late 90's we visited the Wools of New Zealand research facility in New Zealand to see the machine they created to prevent watermarking, pooling and pile reversal. Simply put, the carpet is misted with water and then the nap (the pile lay direction) is set with heat and rollers compressing the carpet surface. This process sets the nap – kind of like giving the carpet surface a permanent so it stays set in one direction and can't change. We have these types of machines in tufted carpet mills, actually used in the finishing process, when making carpet. Same process only a bit different and used for a different purpose. Synthetic cut pile carpets today no longer use staple fibers and have a much higher twist, so they are not as susceptible to watermarking, pooling and pile reversal. It once plagued the industry, but we rarely see it today.



This has been a little bit of information about a large segment of the commercial flooring market. It's a unique market segment with limited players with exclusive flooring products requiring exceptional installation expertise and tools. Not a market for the faint of heart, especially at the high end.



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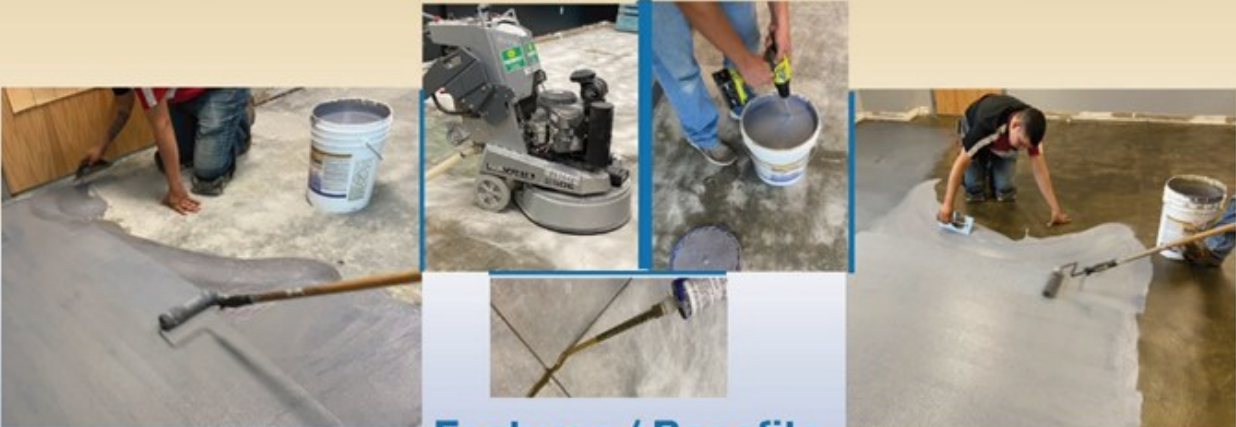
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Contact - Nance Carpet - Kimberlee Cloer <kimberlee.cloer@nancecarpet.com>

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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