

## WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A FLOORING SPECIFICATION (Part II)

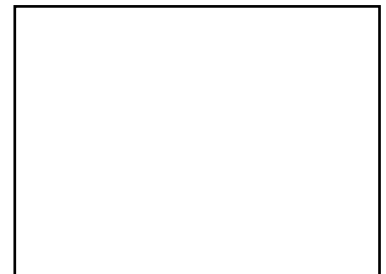
Continuing on to Part II from our last issue of The Commercial Flooring Report on What to Include in a Flooring Specification with the next item, Product Testing. No product should ever be specified for any project without first undergoing a series of tests. The testing should mirror the tests the manufacturer states the product complies with on their samples and in their specifications. Additional tests should also be conducted to determine the performance levels of the products, the structural integrity and the ability of the product to realistically perform as expected for the application and the use it is going to be subjected to. Take for example a vinyl flooring material rated as having a 1,000 pound static load rating. That is the ability to withstand 1,000 pounds of pressure without indenting. Testing the product first will determine whether that number is achievable, determining if the product can realistically achieve that level of performance or if it was just a marketing statement. Remember, words don't change the laws of physics or science. Testing is science and unveils the true performance of a product realistically.

A list of tests follows for carpet and vinyl that should be included in a flooring spec and that we would routinely conduct for our clients. Many of the tests exceed the standard test levels because we like to see how far the product can be taken before it fails. What's surprising is that when the right product is specified it rarely fails.

Remember, what you're reading here are excerpts from an actual flooring project specification with explanations, so feel free to use this information in any spec you may be writing.

### PRODUCT TESTING:

Submitted product will be independently tested for structural integrity, construction, compliance with the manufacturer's specifications and influence of compromising conditions, visible defects and compromises of product integrity. (see test listing).





### PRODUCT COMPLIANCE – TESTS LIST

For Carpet Tile and Broadloom:

- Hexapod 12K, 24K, 48K (K is thousands of cycles)
- Roll Chair 20K
- D 6540 Soiling and Cleaning 1, 3, 5 times (test is done after one cycle, three cycles and five cycles)
- Stain Battery
- Static (for static dissipation so no one gets electrocuted or computers don't get fried)
- Lightfastness (this is an ultraviolet light test – sun and artificial lighting)
- Ozone
- NO2
- Radiant Flux
- Smoke Density
- Tuft Bind
- Edge Ravel
- Dimensional Stability
- Delamination
- Weight
- Pill Test
- Static Resistance

For Resilient Flooring Materials of Vinyl or Rubber, etc., – tile or sheet goods and Cove Base:

Submitted product will be tested for structural integrity, construction compliance and influence of compromising conditions as it applies to the particular hard surface product or cove base according to following test listing as they apply to each product:

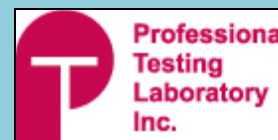
- F 410 Wear Layer Thickness (what it actually is compared to what it is stated to be)
- F 137 Flexibility
- F 1914 Indentation
- F 925 Chemical Resistance
- F 1514 Resistance to Heat
- F 1515 Resistance to Light
- F 970 Static Load
- D 3884 Abrasion Resistance
- F 2199 Dimensional Stability
- F 1861 Staining

There may be other tests that would help the product selection process that are either standard tests or tests that are created due to the nature of the project and any special performance factors to consider. For example, if the flooring, regardless of type, is installed in an office building that has floor to ceiling windows which get constant sun exposure, even with UV inhibitor on the windows, the flooring material is going to get pounded with sunlight daily.

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It must be able to withstand the exposure and the damage sunlight will do. That would require a product that has very high resistance to UV light and testing the product to failure would be required. By doing this you can see how good or bad the performance is. You can then make the necessary adjustments in the flooring or lighting influence to protect your investment and make changes in the dye or dye system. This is one of the key aspects we bring to the project for our clients. You have to be able to determine what works where and how to prevent a failure from occurring in the product itself. You can't just look at the flooring, you have to look at and be aware of the environment it will live in.

#### SUBMITTALS:

- ✓ Four carpet tiles and architects folder with specifications will be submitted for the following requested products being considered for project.
- ✓ Broadloom carpet samples
- ✓ Samples of hard surface flooring materials
- ✓ Samples of cove base
- ✓ Samples of concrete stain and colorants

This would also be relevant to whatever the flooring material would be whether carpet, vinyl, rubber, cork or some type of stone for a project.

#### AFTER SELECTION OF SAMPLES:

Material selected will be provided for mock up installations.

#### SAMPLES AND MOCK UPS FOR SITE:

Adequate material to be furnished by each manufacturer to construct a 12 x 12 mockup (16 yards or 144 square feet) for each color and style requested for acceptance by Architect, client and consultant.

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The amount of the material can vary certainly, depending on what you want to see relative to the performance of the product and the integrity of the installation. When we work as consultants on a project we also request samples of the same materials provided to the client be furnished to us so that independent testing can be done.

#### FINISHED SAMPLES:

To be furnished to consultant and site for comparison to samples previously submitted, as per above, for comparison and final acceptance. Finished product must be as accepted in the submitted samples.

This point is very important as you want to make sure what's been produced is the same as what's been sampled that the selection decision has been based on. This is the time to catch any variations in the product that should or shouldn't be there. For example, if the color or texture varies from what you expect based on the sample selected from, now is the time to voice your concern. It's now that a change can be made. You can also write into the spec that no variation or deviation from the sample the flooring was selected from will be acceptable, within reason. Within reason means that, every run of the product is not going to be the exact same but the variation should not be significantly different nor so much that the product provided varies from the sample enough that it really doesn't resemble what you selected. This is the reason for getting samples and then getting samples of what is going to actually be supplied for the project.

#### INSPECTION BEFORE SHIPMENT:

All material to be thoroughly inspected by the manufacturer prior to shipment to job site for quality, visible defects, blemishes or visible compromising conditions also, relative to carpet tiles; for flat, square and stable and clean, unfrayed edges of carpet tiles out of the box – no exceptions. Carpet tiles with inherent curl or other compromising conditions shall not be shipped or accepted for installation. Samples of carpet tiles will be submitted to independent analysis, evaluation and testing prior to acceptance for installation. Consultant will inspect all broadloom and carpet tile material during finishing, processing and prior to shipment to insure quality. (this is a service we offer our clients)

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Regardless of the product the manufacturer has the responsibility to insure that it is of first quality both visually and structurally. The architect, flooring contractor and flooring installer are not the industries quality control department. The product must be of first quality out of the wrapper. Anything to the contrary does not warrant the comment, “you shouldn’t have installed it.” Well, our response is, “you shouldn’t have shipped it and you made it and saw it first, so what’s the excuse?” There is no excuse. On our projects we know how to insure the product is what it is supposed to be before it gets to the jobsite; if not it doesn’t get shipped or installed. Actually, manufacturers appreciate this as well because they become part of a team effort to insure there are no glitches in the project due to a problem with the product. They get full value for the product, no claims get filed and their reputation is improved and trust built in the market place. As big as the industry is, it’s very small when there’s a problem. I’ve always been amazed at how fast news, especially if it’s bad, travels in the flooring industry – faster than light speed!

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**FLOORING CONTRACTOR AND INSTALLER QUALIFICATIONS:**

Flooring contractor and installer, aside from helpers or apprentices, must have a minimum of 10 years’ experience involved solely in the installation of commercial flooring products as specified for the installation at the project, be financially sound, be capable of complying with specifications for the project relative to the flooring contractors’ responsibility, employ journeymen or master certified installers with at least 10 years’ experience in the type and scope of work necessary for this project with references and known history. Have on site project manager supervision to insure strict compliance with manufacturer’s installation guidelines and industry standards. Have the appropriate installation tools, material and accessories necessary to successfully install all of the specified flooring material products. Have facilities to safely store and handle the flooring material products in an environmentally conditioned space and have appropriate vehicles to safely transport the flooring materials. No unqualified flooring dealers, such as a primarily retail floor

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covering dealer, will be considered for participation nor will they be allowed to be subcontracted to. Any subcontractors engaged in the project must meet the same qualifications as the primary flooring contractor on the project.



The Flooring Contractor and Installer Qualifications are pretty stout. Most commercial projects should require only one, accurate and precise shot at installation – doing it right the first time. This is not a crapshoot and the low bidder shouldn't be the primary consideration based on price alone. Just as in this entire specification process covered in this issue, the flooring contractor and installers should be part of the team focused on success. These people are what make the flooring work. Without a successful, professional and qualified installation the flooring material has no value. You want the best, most professional and highly trained and experienced installation people on the job and there's no reason you can't write the spec to insure you get them. This is a very, very important part of the flooring specification and it should never be compromised. It all comes together with this section of the spec.

In Part III of this series we'll continue with WHAT TO INCLUDE IN A FLOORING SPECIFICATION. If you have any questions or need any help, call or email us and we'll be happy to assist you.

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