

# CFR The Commercial Flooring Report

For the Commercial Floor Covering Industry

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## The Value of Taking Pictures and Keeping Notes

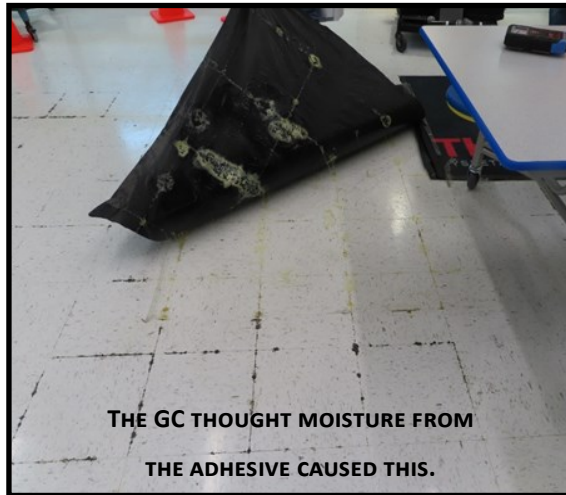
To say that commercial flooring complaints have gotten more complicated, complex, and contentious is an understatement. Denying claims and complaints by manufacturers has become an artform. Some manufacturers profess to have improved customer relations and customer experience at the front end but when a problem arises the claims department doesn't seem to be on the same page. Saying one thing and doing another does not endear the flooring contractor, general contractor, or end user to the flooring brand. The accuser in a claim (the flooring firm, GC, etc.) becomes the accused and must defend themselves against an opposition (manufacturer) that refuses to face reality which is that their product is legitimately defective and proven so, when that is the case. The flooring products physical contortions occurring at the installation site, on and in the flooring, especially when those conditions exist in product out of the box, don't get there by any other means. Of course there can be issues with the substrate, the floor prep, the installation, and the flooring itself or other influences. The depth of the causes, which can always be explained, is often missed, or misunderstood, by many. One who understands what is influencing or causing the complaint can discern the cause readily enough of which one it is - that includes whatever the flooring is doing.

What does this have to do with taking pictures and keeping notes? Every general contractor that we work with, when asked if there are pictures of whatever we're asking to see, has them. They also have notes on every aspect of the project -with dates and times- including the flooring. The flooring contractor should be doing the same thing. To prove what conditions you had to work under, what you did, how you did it, what products were used, and what the finished product looked like. You should also have a running chronology of everything that was done, when, how, with whom and with whatever. There should be no doubt or question about anything done before, during or after the flooring installation. This would include what the environmental conditions were. (You should all have FloorCloud for this) How and when the flooring was delivered, where it was stored, how it was acclimated, what the substrate conditions were like, who you had conversations with and what was said and when, and if there were issues that would compromise the product or the installation that were or were not addressed. If you memorialize everything in pictures and with documentation, that includes dates and times, you have covered yourself completely. He who has the most evidence/information and proof wins.



If a complaint arises you must do the same thing. What is the complaint, where, how does it look, when was it first noticed, where was it first noticed, has it gotten worse or is it getting worse? Take pictures – and learn to take them correctly. There is a right way and a wrong way. You can't just take a picture at the flooring. Start by standing so that the entire affected area can be seen and then you can get in closer. You want to encompass the entire affected area not just one spot. Then, if you have them, mark up the floor plans where the problem exists. Make sure all the information gathered is kept in one place and that it doesn't just exist on a project manager's device who ultimately left and took the information with them. It must be kept somewhere that the business has access to it. This stuff may sound simple but on a large project, the arena that we work in, you have no idea how important this is. The product and circumstances will most often tell the story but we're going to ask for a whole lot more information and someone is going to have it, so let it be you. Also, if you've installed this product before or after the job that is failing, make note of that. If what you have is a one of, that is, you didn't have a problem before or after with the same product, crew, conditions, etc., then chances are very good that this is a product issue.

In a recent situation where hard surface flooring was installed and the installation was being spoiled by moisture overwhelming the flooring, the general contractor was blaming the moisture in the adhesive which put the flooring contractor in the bull's eye. Of course, this was an absurd accusation, but the flooring contractor had to defend himself. When we looked at the installation and then sat down with all parties including the flooring contractor, general contractor, concrete contractor, and architect the truth was revealed. The concrete slab on grade had a moisture vapor retarder installed but incorrectly. It was under the granular fill, not under the concrete, where it is supposed to be. It was not wrapped up the sides of the slab. There were pictures of all of this that the GC had, and provided. It had rained heavily during this period of time when the concrete was poured and left open. The concrete had been highly hydrated. The irrigation system around the building was soaking the peripheral base of the concrete. None of the conditions found were caused by the flooring contractor. All of them had to do with the construction of the building, the conditions at the time the concrete was poured, the misplaced vapor retarder (which we had the architect's schematic drawing for), the concrete itself (which we had the mix design for) and which they added water to, and the irrigation system



**THE COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT**

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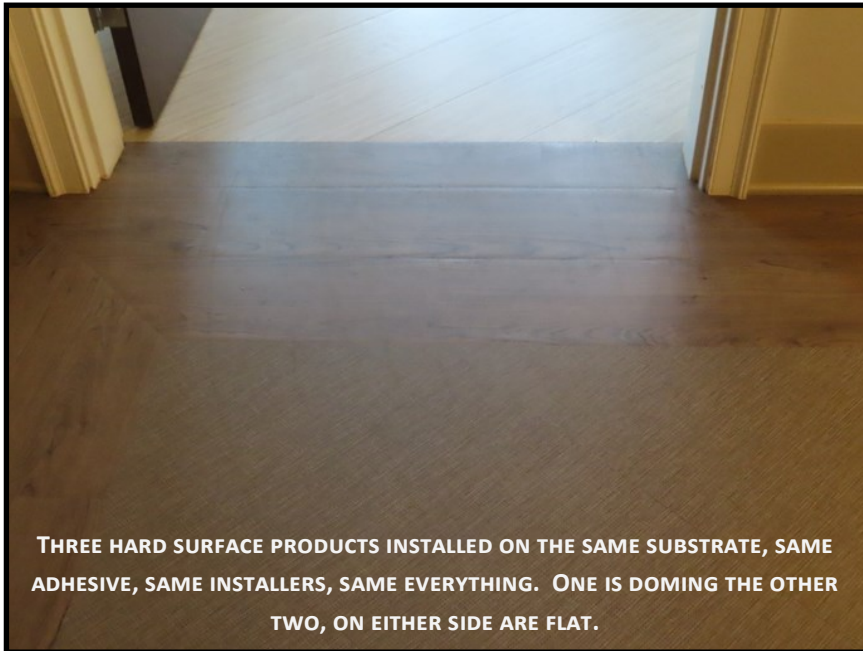
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(which was seen when inspecting the outside of the building) as well as some grading issues. Finding out what actually caused the flooring failure saved the flooring contractor \$400,000.00 had the actual cause not been determined with irrefutable proof.

Speaking of the product telling a story. In another case there was an installation of six types of flooring, five hard surfaces, and one carpet tile, all from different manufacturers. Only one of the hard surface products was exhibiting doming. All of the products were installed on the same on grade concrete substrate, prepared the same way, installed with the same adhesive, by the same installation crews, under the same controlled environmental conditions with no issues other than one product doming. A problem we've



seen multiple times around the country with this particular vinyl plank product. The manufacturer insisted the problem was due to the installation or any other concocted idea. If all the other flooring is fine, with everything being the same, as mentioned, then it stands to reason this one product is a problem. Mind you again, this product has been an issue around the country doing the same thing in every location. The inherent defect in the product is known, the evidence exhibited at the installation site relative to what it is doing and why is irrefutable.

**CHANGING THE RULES IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GAME:**

In another case, changing the rules in the middle of the game – altering the installation instructions to fit the problem. For example, the adhesive. Doing what was thought to be the right thing by the flooring contractor, per the published installation guidelines, applying the adhesive and

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**Guidance, Consulting, Determination Legal Assistance and Resolution of Flooring Issues:**

- Onsite Physical Investigation - Product Sample Evaluation
  - Identifying Substrate, Concrete And Moisture Issues
- Certified Product Testing - Insurance Loss Evaluations
- Dispute Resolution, Litigation Assistance and Proffered Expert Witness

**Right Product in the Right Place: Get it in the Door; Keep it on the Floor**

- Construction/Renovation Project Assistance to Determine Suitable Flooring
- Develop Flooring Specifications - Installation Assistance
- New Flooring Product Development and Marketing
- Educational Seminars (Corporate and Personal/Individual)

**"WHEN NO ONE ELSE HAS ANSWERS, WE DO"**

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letting it “set up” was how the flooring was stated to be installed. When the flooring shows signs of lifting, cupping, or curling all of a sudden, the installation instructions were changed to, “you should have installed the flooring with the “wet set” method” by the manufacturers rep. Well, if that was what was supposed to be done, and you knew that to be so with this particular product (whatever it may be), why isn’t it in the published installation instructions? You can’t just change the rules to fit your position. The facts are what the facts are, and the science always proves it.

In another case. If the residual adhesive on the substrate is scraped off, per the installation instructions, and the new flooring is installed with the required type of adhesive, and it lifts at the end or edges, and the cause is said to be the residual adhesive, and now you say it should have been ground off, why didn’t you say in your installation instructions that all old adhesives should be ground off? Nowhere does any mention of grinding off old residual adhesive appear anywhere in the installation guidelines. Nor is a grinder mentioned in the list of equipment you should have to install the product. If the old adhesive was to be completely removed why is a grinder not on the list of equipment required to install this particular product (whatever it may be) To say later that something you should have done wasn’t and to accuse you of causing the problem, why was no mention of it made anywhere? Is there a problem with telling the truth? A warning would be nice so that you don’t have to have a flooring failure and the manufacturer doesn’t have to deal with a claim. God forbid that sales would freak if we mentioned anything that may sound negative against a sale of the product. And if that’s the case, change the product so that it will work or, as stated previously, put the information in the installation guidelines. Just say, all old residual adhesive must be completely removed from the substrate, and how, when installing this product. That would do the trick and be enough. Now both parties would know if something that was supposed to be done was or wasn’t. A clear cut visually determined cause of the flooring/installation failure. Wow. How easy would that be?

**ADDRESSING ANOTHER VERY IMPORTANT MATTER THAT WE CAN FINALLY DEFINE:**

Professional Testing Laboratory (PTL), the leading testing facility in the flooring industry, just installed new testing equipment for checking the engagement system profile on floating vinyl plank and tile resilient flooring and laminate. The premise of the analysis is to determine if the engagement system fits together properly or not. This can be achieved by examining the cross sectional profile of the engagement system and seeing if the milling is appropriate or shows compromising conditions. This is a major step and an extraordinary revelation since one of the biggest complaints on these floors is that the engagement system breaks from improper fitting. It is most often attributed to a substrate issue when in fact it may actually be the flooring itself. This is one of those situations where we say the answer is hiding in plain sight, but nobody can see it. Now we can. LGM works with PTL on a regular basis testing and examining flooring materials of all kinds and ancillary products. If you have need of this testing, we can handle it for you.



If you have questions, concerns, or a major issue you need help with contact us. We have experts in every category from concrete to carpet and everything in between and we always have the answer, always.

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FCEF exists to bring awareness to the opportunities in a flooring installation career, recruit new talent, aid in the funding of their education, and facilitate job placement into flooring industry careers.

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### **Take Advantage of this!**

Are you confused by all the changes occurring in the industry? Is the onslaught of new flooring products, soft and hard, adhesives, site related conditions as well as substrate issues, overwhelming you? Do you want to stay out of trouble and avoid a flooring failure? Let us help. We can come to your business with an educational program that addresses all these issues, and more. Afterwards we can engage you and your team in a question and answer session that is sure to help clear the cobwebs of chaos.



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