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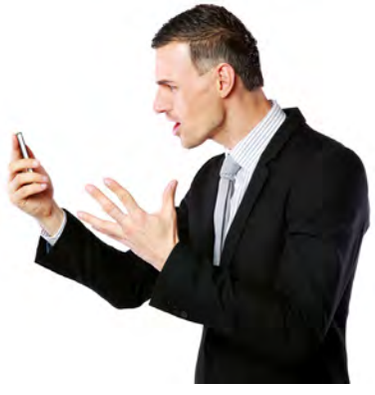
TRUE OR FALSE: TILE RUN OFF MEANS FLOOR TILES NOT SQUARE

In a situation where squareness of LVT flooring tiles is being questioned, I use a specific approach that always provides a clear answer as to whether or not the floor tiles are defective in size or shape.

Several years ago I received a call from a flooring manufacturer disclosing that they had a seven-phase commercial project that was in trouble. The first two large phases, approximately 10,000 square feet each, had been installed and there was tile run off throughout the space. The flooring contractor filed a complaint with the manufacturer, claiming defective product, and refused to pay for the product that his team had installed. With no solutions to fix his problem, the flooring contractor went on to order product for phases 3, 4 and 5. The manufacturer of the floor had tried to work with the contractor but had no solution for the problems that plagued phases 1 and 2, despite their numerous attempts to rectify the problem. Site visits had been made by the distributor rep, an independent inspector and even the flooring manufacturer's Director of Tech Services. These attempts to provide on-site assistance were met with blatant disregard by the flooring contractor who pushed forward with Phase 3 and wouldn't listen to anything he was told by these specialists. The flooring manufacturer was in danger of losing a good customer and the situation was spiraling out of control with no agreed upon resolution so they called on me.



This is often when I get the "call"- when tensions are high, stakes are high and the cause of the problem is unresolved. In many cases I am the flooring manufacturer's last stop before litigation. Knowing that my customer, the flooring manufacturer, wants to minimize their liability and make things right on the job site, I set my parameters for how I work so there are no surprises. With full authority over the situation and my customer's trust, I have the ability to handle the situation and work through it my way.

Before ever setting foot on a job site, to troubleshoot a problem, I talk with everyone and anyone who might have information directly related to the job and the flooring product that was specified. This might include the end user, flooring contractor, Distributor Rep and anyone else involved in trying to solve the problem especially the flooring installer. This time consuming step often reveals hidden agendas and valuable information that can identify the root cause of the problem before I ever set foot in the building where the floor has been installed. Before arriving at the job site, I take the time to educate myself on the technical data and specifications for installation and care of the material being used on the project. Within the printed literature that comes with flooring materials lies a great deal of information including subfloor specifications and acceptable deviations from flat level conditions, which will prove important in this situation. By the time I arrive on site, with all involved parties present, I have a lot of knowledge about the claim, site conditions and the flooring material and I've begun to build relationships with each individual so they know I'll be focused on business when we meet and I'm an expert in troubleshooting flooring problems on large scale projects. These meetings are not always the most pleasant and part of my job is to diffuse tension so we can work on a solution. In a situation where squareness of LVT flooring tiles is being questioned, I use a specific approach that always provides a clear answer as to whether or not the floor tiles are defective in size or shape. Through a process of elimination, the root cause of the problem can be easily identified and a solid solution implemented. The easiest and fastest process is to simply check the product on site for squareness, read the product information sheets and check the floor for level deviations.

First, **check the product for square.** The simple task takes only a few minutes to execute, but determines, without a doubt, if the problem lies with the product. Assemble four (4) flooring tiles

on a flat surface running all in the same direction and mark the top of each so that it is easy to identify. Fit the tiles together so they meet at one corner with joints and edges tight to each other without any deviation. Next rotate one tile to the right 90 degrees and tighten all the tiles for smooth edges at the perimeter and tight joints at the common point of contact. Continue rotating the same tile, 90 degrees at a time, until it has been rotated 360 degrees and is finally positioned at its original starting point. Continue this process for each tile until all four tiles have been rotated successfully 360 degrees. **Note any gaps or uneven edges with a mark on the tile(s) edge. Typically if there is a problem with squareness, you will immediately identify the problem with the first tile. If you find a discrepancy, you have uncovered a visible defect (out of square) and you should stop installing the floor immediately!** This instruction is included in most flooring manufacturer literature along with directions to call the manufacturer, explain your findings and get further directions on how to proceed.


Second, **if during you squareness check you notice a distinct difference between width and length and it is consistent on all four tiles**, reference the product installation instructions and look for information pertaining to directionality of the material. If the flooring tiles are intended to follow a particular pattern, more often than not a directional arrow is printed on the back of the tiles to avoid any confusion. If this is the case, following the specified direction should solve the problem. If direction is not specified and you discover a discrepancy between the tile's width and length, contact the flooring manufacturer. They may recommend alternating the tiles during installation if the deviation between width and length is within certain parameters, this format should keep itself in check.

Third, if tiles check out as true, square and uniform in width and length, **compare manufacturer's instructions for subfloor & preparation to site conditions and procedures followed.** Typical specifications include directions that a modular product, like LVT, be installed over

subfloors conforming to ASTM F710 for concrete and other monolithic floors or ASTM 1482 for wood floors. **Check for subfloor flatness using a true 10 straight edge.** Deviation exceeding 3/16" in ten lineal feet or the equivalent of 1/32" in 12 inches is typically too much and must be leveled prior to flooring installation per manufacturer's instructions. Ignoring this rule creates challenges in terms of maintaining a straight, true, square installation without gaps, runoff or birdeye corners -a void where tiles meet at the corners. Laying tiles over sub floor deviations that exceed flooring manufacturer specifications will also exceed the skill set of most flooring installers and the completed installation will likely be unacceptable to the end user. To make matters worse, the finished floor will progressively look worse over time due to dirt and debris that settles in the gaps and open joints and becomes a haven for growth of bacteria and germs.

Now, like PAUL HARVEY, let me share the rest of the story. After talking with everyone during my front-end loading, about the situation at hand, we met at the job site and performed my 4-tile experiment to check for squareness of the luxury vinyl tiles. Everything checked out and everyone agreed because they watched closely while I turned each tile. In less than an hour, there was consensus among all present, including the flooring contractor, that the material had no visible defects. During the next twenty hours, I worked with the team of installers showing them how to navigate the current conditions that were not ideal with a subfloor that deviated in some places 1-3/4 inches in ten feet. This deviation was the root cause of the tile run off. With guidance, the installation team was able to salvage the project by making corrections to the initial project phases and using the techniques they learned to compensate for the off-level sub floor. The end user was happy with the corrections and the project continued without further issues. All seven phases were completed to the satisfaction of the end user and the flooring contractor made payment, in full, for all seven phases.

I love happy ENDINGS!