

ELIMINATE FLOORING COMPLAINTS – READ INSTALLATION INSTRUCTIONS

Flooring industry standards typically places the liability on the flooring contractor, retailer or installer when a new sheet vinyl floor is put over top of an existing floor.

Many complex flooring problems can be avoided if one key step is included during the installation process, or rather before the flooring installer gets started gluing, fitting or cutting flooring material. What is this crucial step? Read the Installation Instructions!

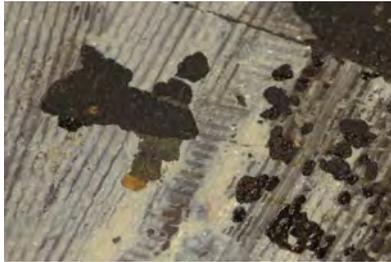


Makers of floors, flooring adhesives, patching and leveling compounds and concrete moisture mitigation systems have a common thread in that each, on their branded product labels, inserts, packaging and/or websites, provide documented instructions for flooring installation. Most of these instructions, for successfully laying a floor, share the same logic in their detailed, easy to read, step by step directions that must be followed to ensure a quality installation of resilient flooring.

The directions, that accompany new sheet vinyl, lvt plank or vct flooring, are created after extensive research and development including industry standard tests, in-house and field applications, and then a broader beta test to best ensure that directions can be correctly interpreted before going to the marketplace. This is true for all types of floors including vinyl, cork, rubber and non-pvc floors. Typical hard surface flooring instructions will include detailed specs for adhesives or tools to use in the installation process. These important documents only hold true value when the person contracted to install the floor reads them, prior to installation. Floor covering installation instructions are considered the 'Holy Grail of the flooring industry.' Manufacturers of flooring material will reject a defective claim when it's evident that the flooring installer did not follow their published installation instructions. For a flooring company to figure out if directions were followed during installation, some investigating must be done. That's where I come in.



On a recent assignment to look at, what was claimed to be, a defective non-pvc sheet floor due to bonding issues, I found that four different types of adhesives were evident in defined trowel ridges when I pulled back a section of flooring. Among the adhesives was a black emulsion that



Black cutback adhesive must be removed before installing new resilient floor.



Four different adhesives were found under new non-pvc sheet.

typically signifies black cutback adhesive- which up until 1984 contained asbestos and post 1984 proved ineffective as a water-based adhesive without the asbestos, so either way it was bad. Thankfully, the cutback adhesive on this floor did not contain asbestos

according to the laboratory test that were subsequently done. Based on evidence, found while inspecting the subfloor and underside of the sheet flooring, it was apparent that the contractor had applied carpet adhesive (definitely not recommended) over three other existing adhesives and he failed to mechanically remove pre-existing adhesive. None of this is in accordance with manufacturer install directions. After reading, not one but, three sets of flooring-related installation instructions from the flooring manufacturer, adhesive supplier and floor-patch compound company, it was discovered that the recommended adhesive had actually been purchased yet was not used. None of the four adhesives found on the underside of the laid non-pvc sheet matched the recommended adhesive. With this knowledge in hand, we were able to determine that nothing was wrong with the flooring material and that the cause of adhesive bond failure was that the wrong adhesive was used for this flooring job. Ironically, even the incorrectly applied premium carpet adhesive stated on the product label stated, "Restriction: DO NOT install over adhesive residue including cutback."

On a separate project, involving a new vinyl sheet floor in a hospital, I was asked to investigate small bumps that were showing up on the new floor, creating a bubbled



Spray Adhesive label illustrates required spray pattern for floor install.



Actual spray adhesive pattern on floor indicates spray is too heavy.



Over-use of spray adhesive resulted in visible bumps in finished floor.

texture in many areas of the healthcare facility. The hospital administrators were understandably unhappy with the appearance of the resilient floor they had just purchased. In order to take a close look at what was going on, I had to cut into the floor a pull back a section. What I found was that the bumps showing on the face of the sheet vinyl were due to clumps of adhesive where it had been applied too heavily during floor installation. Had the flooring installer read the instructions for the spray adhesive used on this flooring project, he would have seen the photo, on the can of spray adhesive, illustrating the what the spray pattern should look like when the right amount of adhesive is used. This photo alone would have been an excellent guide for the flooring installer if only he had taken the time to read the manufacturer provided installation information before starting the job.



Overlaid floor wears more quickly at telegraphing joints from floor tiles underneath.



When laying new resilient sheet over existing vct floor tiles, results are not always good due to existing conditions.

Everywhere I go I can't help but look at floors and speculate about a facility's maintenance routines or techniques used by a flooring contractor when installing a floor based on the evidence I see when I glance around a room. When it's appropriate, I like to take a

closer look and capture some photos. In one instance, while attending a seminar in a municipal building, I couldn't help but notice the pattern of pre-existing 12-inch flooring tiles, likely VCT, showing through sheet vinyl flooring laid over top of it. I don't know if the facility manager put in a complaint to the flooring manufacturer but if they did, it was likely denied because most resilient sheet flooring product comes with a set of instructions that includes a disclaimer about new flooring material being installed over old floors. Flooring industry standards typically places the liability on the flooring contractor, retailer or installer when a new sheet vinyl floor is put over top of an existing floor. The recommendation is to remove old flooring material and adhesive before laying a new floor. The language in flooring manufacturer literature is more specific than that and contains certain conditions that must be met for substrates to achieve a successful flooring application.

What is the best way for industry technicians to eliminate complaints, callbacks and claims from customers? It's simple, ALWAYS READ THE INSTRUCTIONS before installing any floor!

