



Beaulieu Residential

Tek Newsletter
Vol. 6 No 8

Buckles in Direct Glue-Down Commercial Installations

Because of the wide variety of commercial environment end-uses it is not really possible for carpet manufacturers to establish one catch all method of installation. As an example, commercial end-uses such as offices, lobbies, churches, schools, libraries, motel/hotel lobbies and guest rooms, airport terminals etc., are all unique. Each commercial area has their own requirements, and these requirements can vary significantly from one job to the next. Add to this the fact that carpet manufacturers may require very specific installation requirements on some of their products. Then there are considerations for traffic loads, subfloor types, various type floor outlets and floor plan layout-all of which makes every commercial carpet installation a custom job.

In the majority of commercial environments the choice method of installation is direct-glue down. Rolling traffic, chairs equipped with casters and traffic load dictate the need for a trouble free method of installation to prevent the onset of wrinkles and buckles, re-stretching, and possible delamination. The improvement in floor adhesives over the years provides a strong grab to the carpet and floor that lasts the lifecycle of a carpet in even the most rigorous installations. The direct glue-down method also prevents carpets from expanding or contracting with changes in ambient heat and humidity as a result of efforts to conserve energy after working hours.

Occasionally, a large commercial carpet installation won't go down without a slight hitch. Perhaps one of the most common hitches is a buckle that occurs in the carpet 3-5 days after installation. When spreading adhesive over the large drops typically encountered in commercial installations some of the floorcovering adhesive may set-up before the carpet is actually laid into the adhesive spread or the carpet is not thoroughly rolled. Subsequently, the resulting adhesive tack is lost and the carpet is not well adhered in the effected areas.

One fast and effective way to remove buckles in direct glue-down is by applying steam to the affected areas using an inexpensive apparel steamer. Keep in mind that “live steam” (water above 212 degrees F) can damage pile yarns. The heat from the iron will make the carpet pliable. Before steaming, be certain the water in the steamer is clean and clear to prevent staining the carpet. It is also wise to first vacuum the affected areas to remove any soils. Apply steam for a short time so that it can penetrate the carpet and reactivate the floorcovering adhesive. Prolonged steaming must be avoided since the excess moisture can destroy the adhesive grab. Be sure to hold the steam iron approximately ¼” above the carpet to avoid distortion of the pile yarns. Since steaming can cause the pile yarns to temporarily bloom, be certain not to rub and distort the carpet’s pile. After steaming the carpet press it down into the floorcovering adhesive using a small hand roller.

If the buckles in the carpet return three possibilities must be considered. The steam was not applied adequately; the buckle was not rolled sufficiently (or before the adhesive re-set); or there was an insufficient amount of adhesive on the floor. The first two possibilities can be corrected by re-steaming the affected areas. However, if insufficient amount of adhesive is suspected the buckled area must either be slit and more adhesive applied by a squeeze bottle, or more adhesive applied under the buckle using a hypodermic needle and then pressing the carpet back into the adhesive.

In smaller installations buckles can develop as a result of laying the carpet into the adhesive spread prior to allowing the adhesive to reach its ideal tack, thus trapping moisture attempting to escape from the adhesive between the carpet’s backing and the adhesive spread. Oftentimes this problem can be remedied by simply waiting a while longer and then rolling the carpet again.

If multiple buckles in the carpet develop chances are the floor was not checked prior to installation for moisture and alkalinity.

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