

Seam Sealing on Direct Glue Down Installations

The importance of proper seam sealing in direct glue down installations can't be overstated or overlooked. When ignored, raveling, fraying and delamination at the seams are inevitable. With installation related issues accounting for approximately 68% of all claims today, this small fundamental step will help reduce these numbers.

A good solvent based or multi-purpose latex based seam sealer can be used to weld the seams together. When properly applied, seam sealer will cover the edges of the primary and secondary backing and the exposed yarn bundles along the trimmed carpet edge, creating a better bond, and reducing the risk of problems at the seam such as raveling, fraying and delamination.

According to the CRI 104 Standard for Installation of Commercial Carpet, "an appropriate direct-glue seam adhesive must be applied to the edges trimmed for seaming and cover the thickness of both the primary and secondary backing without contaminating face yarns". Seam sealer contamination of the face yarns will cause a stiff feel and over time the area will attract soil, causing an unsightly dark line at the seam.

For direct glue-down installations, The CRI 104 also recommends: "the seam adhesive be applied to the cut edge of one side only of the first seam placed into the floor adhesive. When the edges are abutted to form the seam, and while the seam adhesive is still transferable, this seals the first edge as well as the second". It has always been customary for carpet manufacturers to also recommend this same seam sealer application method with direct glue-down, but there is a caveat. Because multi-purpose seam generally does not skim over until at least 15 minutes after application, it typically allows for one carpet edge only application in order to transfer to the adjoining carpet edge up to 30 feet in length. However, because solvent-based seam sealers typically allow for only 5-8 minutes before they skim over and will no longer transfer readily to the carpet edge of an adjoining drop, placing that non-sealed carpet edge into the adhesives in expectation of the seam sealer sealing both carpet edges has repeatedly demonstrated in leaving the edge of the second drop improperly sealed, and thus unprotected against potential edge pulls, raveling, and delamination; any of which conditions that can occur shortly after a newly installed carpet is first exposed to foot traffic. In consideration of this, contrary to CRI recommendations about seam sealer use on a direct glue-down, Beaulieu recommends that installers apply solvent seam sealers to both edges of a carpets intended for use at seam locations until such time that this method of seam sealer use is incorporated into the CRI Installation Guidelines as a standard.

A hot melt seam adhesive can also be used to seal the cut edges intended for use at seam locations. Here again, because this type seam sealer will solidify faster than latex and solvent-based seam sealers, we recommend that hot melt seam adhesive be applied to both cut edges of carpet intended for seams.

The need for application of seam sealer on all constructions of carpet (with the exception of needle punch) is an industry requirement. When you consider the low cost of seam sealer, and the small amount of time required to apply it, it is well worth the time and effort to everyone involved.

From the manufacturer to the dealer, installer and ultimately the end user, this is a win, win situation. The less frequent the call backs and claims dealers and installers must address as a result of improperly sealed seams, the more time they can focus on getting sales and making profits, and the happier the customer will be.

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