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Vacuuming Tips

Because more than 80% of all soils are dry, tracked-on substances the need for routine and effective vacuuming cannot be understated. In fact, vacuuming is considered to be the single most important aspect of the end-user's carpet care and cleaning regime.

Today's makes and models of vacuum cleaners include upright models, canister models, backpack models and central units. Vacuum models equipped with a brush agitator are generally very effective in removing deeply embedded dry soils and liter. However, if the brush agitator is too aggressive, if the vacuum model is not equipped with an "On" and "Off" switch to disengage the brush agitator to provide suction only, or if the brush agitator cannot be removed it can cause excessive bursting and loss of twist, fuzzing of the pile yarns, snagging, fraying, and raveling when used to vacuum carpets with pile heights near one (1) inch. Carpets in this category include Berber, Shag and Frieze constructions.

Some examples of vacuum manufacturers who offer vacuum models equipped with an "On" and "Off" brush agitator switch include Kenmore, Hoover, Oreck, Pro Team, and Panasonic. Beaulieu is not aware of any empirical test data indicating any upright vacuum model equipped with a brush agitator, when properly used, and when used with the right carpet construction, poses a threat to carpet.

Although canister, backpack and central vacuums lack the advantage of the beater bar and brush, many canister models are equipped with larger motors that create more suction than upright vacuums can create. Beaulieu requires that suction only type vacuum models are used to vacuum carpets in the aforementioned category when a suitable upright vacuum model is not available.

To be most effective, an upright vacuum model's height (gauge) adjustment must be properly set to provide enough airflow (sometimes expressed as "lift", and measured in inches of mercury) to remove soil. This requires a vacuum to have an adjustable or self-adjusting pile height setting. Although some consumers believe their vacuum setting must be adjusted so that their vacuum sets firmly on their carpet, a vacuum set too low tends to "seal" the vacuum, thus restricting airflow. Without adequate airflow a vacuum is ineffective. One way to determine proper vacuum height setting is to watch the carpet as you begin to vacuum. If the setting is too low the vacuum may have a tendency to lift the carpet. This more commonly occurs when attempting to vacuum densely constructed carpets. When this occurs, air flow necessary to create suction by the vacuum is choked- off. A consumer who encounters this may contact the carpet manufacture to question why they can't vacuum their new expensive carpet with the same vacuum model they successfully used to maintain the much less-expensive carpet they had in their home for many years. Changes in the sound made by a vacuum's motor can generally indicate the vacuum is set too low to be effective.

Another concern consumer's occasionally encounter when vacuuming dense carpets occurs as a result of a carpet moving slightly with each vacuuming stroke. Besides being caused by a vacuum that is not properly set, this can be caused by a carpet that has not been adequately stretched, and/or by the pad shifting as a result of the pad not being properly secured to the subfloor. In either event, vacuum strokes will tend to chatter (i.e. vibrate or jump) noticeably. Air suction only vacuum models are much less likely to produce chatter during use than upright vacuum models.

Heavy textured loop pile carpet constructions can have a propensity to cause vacuum chatter as a result of a vacuum "bouncing" between the high and low pile yarns (which also causes the vacuum to lose suction). In both instances, vacuum chatter can be reduced, and even avoided when using a vacuum equipped with a brush agitator, and the vacuum will be more effective, when a carpet is vacuumed at an angle to its nap (tufted) direction, and when overlapping vacuum strokes are employed.

Another consideration of vacuuming pertains to the perceived amounts of carpet fibers obtained when vacuuming carpets made from spun/ staple yarn. Because vacuuming is the most effective means to remove shed yarns, and because these shed yarns are agitated and fluffed when vacuumed, vacuum bags and canisters will require more frequent changing until the shed yarns are removed from these carpets.

Beaulieu recommends the use of vacuum models equipped with a high-efficiency filtration system (e.g. HEPA). We also recommend that the vacuum model a consumer selects has been tested and is certified by The Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label Vacuum Program. For information on suitable vacuum makes and models that have obtained the Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label certification visit the CRI's website at www.carpet-rug.org.

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