Beaulieu Residential

"Tek" Newsletter

Wet Carpet

Our experience has been that most homeowners that have carpet that has been subjected to potential damage by water intrusion want new carpet rather than a cleaned and restored carpet their insurance provider will allow them. If this is their only recourse it is absolutely pertinent that the restoration to be done is performed by certified carpet cleaning personnel who are well equipped and trained to do this type work.

When it comes to water damage restoration, "doit-yourselfers" need to find something else to do. And those who select a cleaner using the lowest price as their criterion will often end up with the least results. More often than not, these type bargains usually come from "splash and dash cleaners" who promise a lot, produce little, and care less about the homeowner's well being and the early demise of their carpet.

Anything other than a fast and effective resolution to carpet that has been damaged by water intrusion typically spells disaster for the homeowner and often results in the end of the useful life cycle for both the carpet and pad. Water damaged carpet and pad provides open invitation to fungi and bacterial growth and can emit offensive odors that result from these exposures. This is especially true for the pad, which unlike carpet, can't be cleaned and sanitized and from hereafter tends to be a source of certain malodors, even under the best drying conditions.

If the source of water was from a sewer back-up or overflowing toilet (often referred to as "black water") there is a high likelihood that the carpet and pad has been exposed to potentially dangerous, disease causing pathogens, making restoration impractical and further use of these

products potentially dangerous. In this case, the only course of action is to discard both the carpet and pad.

If the carpet has been exposed to a gray water source (such as an overflowing dishwasher) food particles that may be introduced into the carpet will help provide a food source to the fungi that is now attempting to grow in the still, dark and now damp places beneath the carpet and pad.

Excessive wetting from even "clean water" sources can result in an unhealthy environment if it is not promptly addressed. In fact, the presence of fungi is almost assured anytime a carpet and/or pad have remained wet or damp more than 48 hours after the initial wetting, despite the water source.

Setting aside the many known adverse health effects associated with water damaged sub floors, floor coverings, walls, wall coverings, ceilings, and furnishings, these materials often also lose much of their structural integrity from excessive wettings. Carpet related maladies from these exposures can vary, but in most cases the latex used to laminate the backing can be compromised, resulting in less than adequate delamination strength and tuft bind properties. These are two of the very necessary characteristics required for carpet to perform.

Additionally, dyestuffs can bleed on to other dyes in the carpet and on to other materials within the home, stain resistance treatments can be destroyed, and carpet shrinkage can occur. And then there is the pad! Because most (not all) carpet pad is made from an "open cell" construction (e.g. rebond) they have a tendency to absorb significant amounts of water, which makes complete carpet and pad drying an almost impossible task to achieve in all but isolated

wetting scenarios.

It is also not uncommon to see the development of water rings on the carpet's face as it attempts to dry. These often perplexing rings develop where capillary movement of the water and the soils, minerals, etc., spreads outward from the original wet site until the water evaporates, leaving behind these unsightly residues.

While all of these concerns may lead the casual reader to now consider one of the many hard floor alternatives for their next floor covering purchase, one must consider too that these products are no less benign when it comes to their response to the intrusion of water, they carry with them their own set of problems from this type exposure (e.g. buckling, cupping, cracking, crowning, delamination), and are often more costly and time consuming to repair or replace.

Water restoration work is not part of most carpet cleaner's customer base, and accounts for one percent or less of most carpet cleaner's income. This is specialty work that can require the use of a wide range of tools such as moisture detector probes, 100 lb. rollers, squeegees, water pumps, high velocity air-movers, dehumidifiers, glue gun repair kits, as well as specially formulated cleaners that are part mildew stat, deodorizer, disinfectant, and sanitizer. Add to this list a significant heap of know-how. Wet carpet can be extremely heavy and much caution has to be placed in not bending or folding wet carpet.

Cleaners need to know what to look for when checking for signs of microbial growth, and how to apply anti-microbial agents. They need to be able to properly assess sub floor damage, as well as being able to determine the amount of damage the carpet sustained. They need to know how and where to position pumps, when and when not to use air blowers (to remove as much of the water as possible before moving the carpet and removing the pad), and how to perform sub-surface extraction work.

Restoration attempts for wet, muggy carpet that has been subjected to prolonged and/or excessive water damage that may now or soon be redolent of mold and mildew should only be performed by certified professional carpet cleaners that have been well trained and equipped to meet this task. Homeowners should be aware that low-price deals and the high quality of skill required to do restoration work are not typically found in the same arena.

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