

# floor coveringnews

As seen in Floor Covering News October 26 / November 2, 2009

## **Its what's underneath that counts**

Floating floors are still one of the newest forms of floor covering. Unfortunately, there is some misinformation with regard to what goes underneath, especially when it comes to upgrading the underlayment.

Here is a breakdown of different types and uses of underlayments, as well as an easy way for you to know and explain to your customer how to make the best decision.

- **Base grade 2 in 1 or foam and film:** This type of underlayment is usually used with rental properties, base grade laminate floors, it is also used by home flippers who may be more concerned with appearance and not so much with quality and long lasting performance.
- **3 in 1 pad:** It is the same as above but with an additional layer of film for added moisture protection.
- **3mm pads:** These pads add a little more forgiveness to subfloor imperfections and may provide more sound deadening qualities.
- **Upgraded pads:** They usually provide sound resistance, and may also include mold resistance and additional moisture control properties.

Here is where the choice can get tricky. How do you know and, more importantly, how does the consumer know she is getting the best product for her project? Is a recycled product better? Many of today's recycled underlayment's can hold moisture and water from spills, ultimately destroying the floor above and creating mold growth underneath.

Is bouncing a golf ball over a sample the best way to know the underlayment will absorb sound? I've done this over samples and then over completed installations and learned that hollow sound pockets create inconsistency in sound with pads that are particularly dense. Is the consumer going to play golf on his new floor or walk on it?

Independent testing is not only the easiest way to learn if an underlayment can perform, it makes sense. Just look to see who did the test. If the information is not available it may be the manufacturer's test and not an independent lab. IIC and STC tests provide both impact sound deadening qualities and through-floor sound transmission as well.

Most tests are performed over an 8-inch slab. Even though I knew an 8-inch slab yields better results, I decided to have my company's pad, Silent Blue™, tested over a 6-inch subfloor. I also wanted the laboratory to use a standard 8mm laminate floor. If the under

layment had been tested using a thicker laminate or floating wood floor such as a 12mm or ½" thick floor the test results would have been more favorable.

Though most condominiums do not have a suspended ceiling, most single-family homes do have drywall and the trusses are not visible. While Silent Blue™ still meets and exceeds most condo requirements, it was created for the single-family home and the need to greatly reduce the annoying sound associated with floating floors while providing a safe, mold resistant and extremely moisture resistant underlayment that can be used over radiant heat, at a reduced cost in comparison to other alternatives.

Silent Blue™ goes beyond flooring underlayment. The non-toxic material is also used in biomedical engineering applications as a safe drug delivery device. Other uses include shock absorber for sport shoes and sandals, thermoplastic mouth guards, boots, artificial flowers, outdoor seat cushions and fishing rod handles because of its' zero water absorption quality.