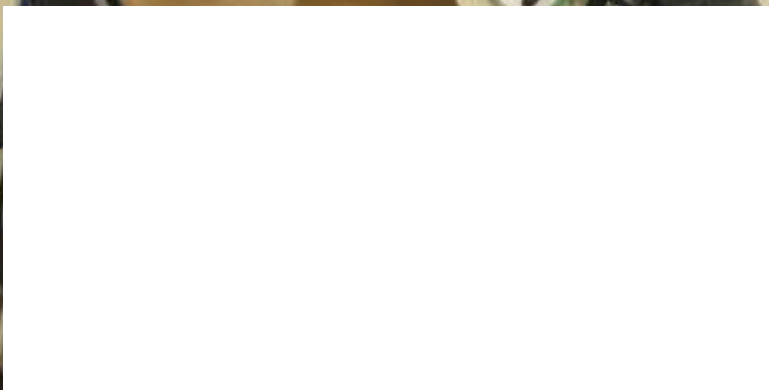


# floorcoveringnews

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## Annual Product Guide



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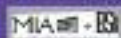
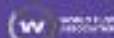
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1920-2011

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Cover photo courtesy of Ambassador Flooring

## FCNews' Product Guide puts the spotlight on innovation

The big story in 2016 is the emergence of WPC as a major product segment, in lock-step with the still white-hot LVT category to form a dynamic duo for the supply chain—from manufacturers to distributors all the way down to specialty flooring retailers.

Seasoned flooring veterans have said the growth curve of the WPC/LVT category is like nothing they have ever seen. This success is a Vitamin B12 boost for a flooring industry that thrives on innovative, new products to excite their customer base.

WPC/LVT is not the only product category that has made headlines this year. In fact, the flooring industry comprises many types of products, and every day companies small and large are investing substantially in research and development to take flooring to the next level. Those investments translate into innovative products that provide solutions and/or offer value while enhancing consumers' living experience.

Carpet is a good example of that. Many of today's new products feature premium softness and soil and stain protection, coupled with a waterproof backing that keeps spills and liquids of any kind from penetrating the carpet's backing. This is seen by some as a game changer for the consumer—especially pet owners and busy families—because stains and odors can now be 100% removed.

Sheet vinyl has often been called the “best value” product in the flooring industry. Flooring executives say when you look at resilient sheet on an installed cost basis and add in the performance attributes, it's the best value out there. How so? It's waterproof, highly scratch resistant and has visuals that cannot be achieved in other categories at the same type or price point.

Much like resilient, laminate has built its reputation by mimicking products such as ceramic, stone and wood. Suppliers are also continuing to raise the bar on design, working tirelessly on structural attributes and innovations to improve performance. Laminate is still one of the most affordable products out there on an installed basis, with fashion-forward and realistic designs helping maintain its popularity despite rumors of its demise against the mighty force of WPC/LVT.

WPC/LVT has cannibalized some product

categories, but not hardwood flooring. There are legions of consumers who don't want a product that looks like wood; they want the real thing. To them, wood remains the coveted flooring option, conveying high fashion, traditional design and upper-echelon style. It increases a home's value; is natural, renewable, recyclable, and adds warmth and comfort to just about any room.

Ceramic is another category that is benefiting by amazing technological breakthroughs in digital and ink-jet printing. Varying tile sizes—from extra-large formats to complementary mosaics—help the category meet varying needs for all types of consumers, along with offering additional opportunities for customization. Over the years domestic producers have invested heavily in their manufacturing capabilities, utilizing technologies such as digital printing to elevate the aesthetic characteristics of products to be as visually appealing as the products imported from Europe. Today, higher-end factories are pushing the ceramic and porcelain

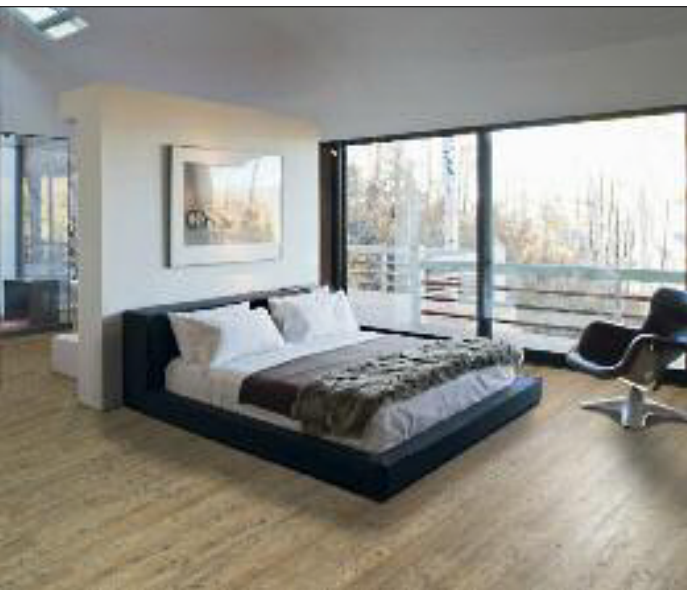
market on the most cutting edge design and style for decorative floor or wall tile products.

FCNews' Product Guide is designed to highlight the latest and greatest from some of the industry's major players across all categories. This special issue is intended to provide information you can use when customers walk into your store seeking a particular product. You may have someone in the market for the newest stain-resistant carpet, or maybe a hardwood floor that will add character to her home. Or perhaps she loves the look of hardwood but either her lifestyle (dogs, children) or budget precludes her from installing it in her home. In that case, perhaps resilient or laminate may be the better alternative. Chances are you'll find a few suppliers of these offerings in the guide, along with companies that provide helpful installation and preparation products. Consider the Product Guide your one-stop shop for highlighted products in the marketplace, assisting in making recommendations to customers.

Each manufacturer that chose to participate in this Product Guide had the opportunity to submit a photo and description of four recently introduced products or top sellers. The hope is these products will remain top of mind when presenting options to the consumer.



# AMORIM



## Arcadian Rye Pine

This washed, weather-beaten alpine larch delivers a rustic flare to any modern space. Arcadian Rye Pine features distinctive wood graining and knots to achieve a sense of depth with luxurious design. The product includes the company's Corktech technology.



## Sawn Twine Oak

The warm and attractive brown shades provide an intimate feeling to any space. Sawn twine oak, which features Corktech technology for added comfort, is an ideal selection for stylish perspectives in modern decors.



## Sawn Bisque Oak

Amorim's new sawn bisque oak features all the benefits of the company's Corktech technology: silence, natural thermal insulation, impact resistance and comfort underfoot. The line is available in beige and brown tones.



## Century Morocco Pine

This rustic pine is constructed with 6mm thickness making it the optimal choice for renovation projects. With Hydrocork technology it can be installed on top of other surfaces, avoiding the need to remove previously existing floors.



WICANDERS®

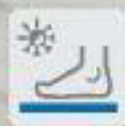


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\* According to a study run by IBV (biomechanical Institute in Valencia, Spain).

# EARTHWERKS

## Pavilion

This new collection is positioned as the ideal multi-family product. Pavilion is protected by Tuff-Shield technology for enhanced strength and durability. It is available in eight colors and 6 x 36 x 2mm x 8mil formats.



## Portia

Portia boasts performance and style with the ease of glue-down installation. Offering unique styling and high performance in each of the six available colorways, Portia features a high-design visual complete with rich colors, beveled edges and textured embossing in a 7 x 48 x 3mm x 20mil construction.



## Parkhill

This 7 x 48 x 6mm x 20mil offering is an original WPC product that aims to capture the essence of nature's beauty while providing a durable and waterproof floor. Parkhill portrays the epitome of high design in a 2G fold-down WPC. This unique six-SKU offering comes with a lifetime residential wear limited warranty.

## Sherbrooke

Sherbrooke, a new WPC collection, offers a wide palette of colors suitable for any space. This waterproof product features a unique embossed texture and design in a 7 x 48 x 5.5mm x 12mil format. In addition, the line includes the Tuff-Shield finish and comes with a 30-year residential wear limited warranty.



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# INHAUS



## Natural Prestige

The Natural Prestige collection is designed for the ever-popular modern contemporary interior. With its clean, knot-free grains, the look of this line exudes classic elegance. What's more, the product's embossed-in-register surface uses varying gloss levels to give it an added level of realism. Natural Prestige is available in five designer colors.

## Colonial Vintage

The new Colonial Vintage collection was designed for homeowners looking to add a more character-rich yet sophisticated look to their interior space. The design is based on reclaimed European white oak and is available in five distinct embossed-in-register colorways.



## Precious Highlands

This collection captures the latest trends in interior design. It features 10 individual items that vary greatly in color and overall appearance from rustic, traditional and exotic looks. Its 12mm platform represents one of the best values available in the industry today.



## Dynamic Highlands

With its five proven designs, 12mm platform and wider plank format, this new collection features some of the company's most popular products. Another reason for its popularity is its varied colors, which range from elegant grays to golden tones.





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# KARNDÉAN



## Reclaimed Heart Pine

Karndean's new LooseLay Longboard collection has been expanded to include reclaimed heart pine, which conveys the rustic appearance of unfinished pine. LooseLay Longboard is 40% longer than standard LooseLay planks, making it Karndean's easiest and fastest laying product to date.



## Lemon Spotted Gum

This product reflects the natural characteristics of this rich, Australian wood. LooseLay Longboard is a premium addition to Karndean's award-winning LooseLay collection. As with all Karndean floors, LooseLay Longboard is waterproof, pet friendly, kid friendly and backed by a lifetime residential warranty.



## Sable

Sable is inspired by the classic structure and timeless appeal of natural limestone. The tiles in Karndean's Da Vinci collection make for an elegant floor that is easy to clean and highly durable. Consumers can incorporate design strips to create the look of grout without the practical drawbacks.



## Limed Cotton Oak

Limed cotton oak pairs dark chocolate hues with delicate knot and grain details. The classic 3-inch planks from Karndean's premium Da Vinci collection combine the look of high-end hardwood with durability and ease of maintenance.



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# MARAZZI



## Urban District Downtown

Urban District BRX [bricks] is influenced by the hand-crafted shapes and highly variegated color expanses of 19<sup>th</sup> century Chicago brick heritage. This bold new take on traditional brick uses modern ceramic technology to recreate the characteristics of artisanal masonry in a slim profile with a wide range of color blends.



## Block Silver

Marazzi's Block series emphasizes naturalness and imperfection while expressing beauty in this new colorbody rectified porcelain interpretation of hand-cast concrete. Block's Sicilian majolica-inspired 6 x 6 porcelain decos reinterpret tradition with contemporary taste. These visuals incorporate sinuous movement and individual expression on walls, countertops and floors.



## Cathedral Heights

Cathedral Heights has its genesis in ancient beams and doors reclaimed from old European churches and mansions. This strong colorbody porcelain with rectified edges boasts a wide range of faces and shades that contribute to highly random, realistic wood-like surfaces. Cathedral Heights infuses modern-day rooms with deep textural quality.



## Urban District Courtyard

Urban District HEX [hexagon] has its basis in the maker movement of hand-crafted, traditional artisan shapes and finishes. This large-format, 16-inch hexagon porcelain challenges preconceived ideas of space interpretation. State-of-the-art digital imaging combine with hand-scraped surface treatment and rustic chiseled edges. The series' six colorways create a bold design statement.


# DARE TO BE BOLD



Thoughtfully designed and authentic in look, Marazzi's Urban District Collection offers a unique combination of textures and colors that add bold character to any design style.

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DARE TO BE BOLD™

PHOTO FEATURES URBAN DISTRICT 800" IN DOWNTOWN  
AND URBAN DISTRICT 570" IN BLUNDED  
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# MERCIER



## Lighter tones

Mercier is expanding its selection of lighter shades. This Scandinavian-inspired trend gives a rustic chic look to flooring with naturally softened colors. Popular looks include element, ivory and mist.

## Wood shows character

Beauty can be found even in imperfection, and each board can be unique. That's what Mercier had in mind while creating Element. Mercier's Element products offered in hard maple and hickory are rich and full of personality. The black and blonde nuances create highly versatile floors that blend with any style.



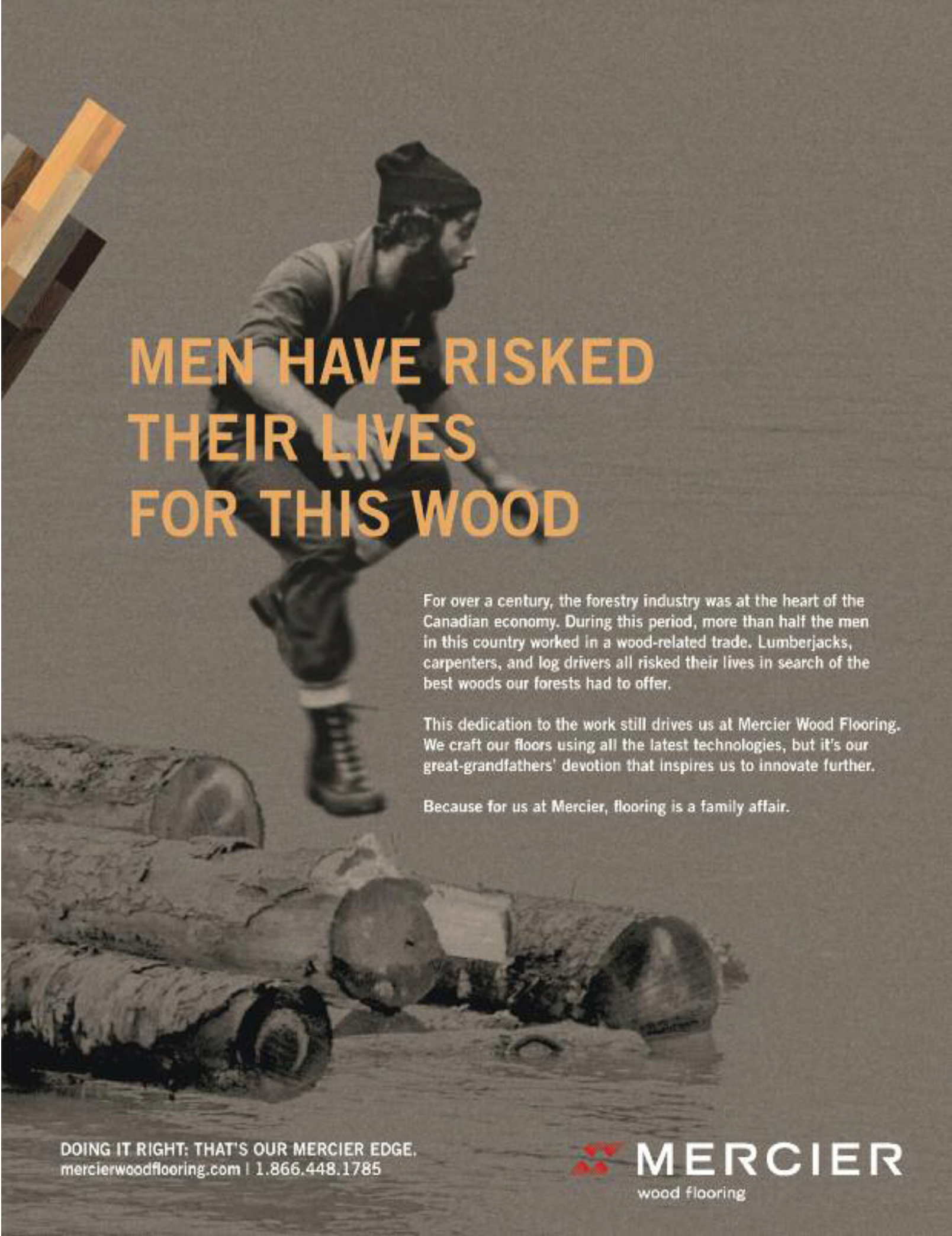
## Textures can be discrete

Two new products, Irish Cream and Taj Mahal, have been added to Mercier's Nature collection. These white-textured floors, marked by the passage of time, can create industrial and modern looks. Mercier's lighter-tone textured products are designed to bring dramatic lightness and originality to any room.



## Hard Maple Legend

This series is another addition to the Nature collection. It is made of Mercier's most distinguished stains on hard maple. Colors include barista and portobello.



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For over a century, the forestry industry was at the heart of the Canadian economy. During this period, more than half the men in this country worked in a wood-related trade. Lumberjacks, carpenters, and log drivers all risked their lives in search of the best woods our forests had to offer.

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wood flooring

# MIRAGE

## Maple White Mist

Mirage expands its Flair collection with white mist, a new color that reveals the pure, natural beauty of wood seldom seen. This subtle off-white goes with delicate and refined seaside decors.



## Red Oak Treasure

Two new colors have been added to the Sweet Memories collection: Treasure, an ash gray with slightly darker accents, and Tree House. The new colors, like the others in this line, recall the authentic charm of old floors yet are an ideal fit for today's trends.

## Red Oak Havana

Havana is a straightforward brown with gold glints that nicely balances more contrasting colors. This new hue is marketed to the consumer looking for a floor with classic appeal that adds elegance and richness to their décor. Havana is available in yellow birch, red oak and maple.



## Maple Rio

Rio and Havana are new colors added to the Admiration collection. Rio is a new sandy beige tint with subtle gray undertones. This soft and soothing color is a timeless tone that also coordinates with urban decors. Red oak and maple are offered in 5- and 6½-inch widths in engineered technology and lock technology in a 4<sup>5</sup>/<sub>16</sub>-inch width.





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# MOHAWK

## Mohawk Continuum

Manufactured using Mohawk Continuum, the latest innovation in PET, Mohawk EverStrand carpet is soft, beautiful, easy to maintain and affordable. EverStrand carpets are made of up to 100% recycled content with added colors, patterns and textures. This patented process takes premium PET from the highest-grade polymer, strengthens the fiber and removes dirt-attracting residue with a multi-step purification system.



## SmartStrand Forever Clean with All Pet Protection

Installed in more than 7 million homes and the top choice for durability, stain resistance and comfort, SmartStrand Forever Clean has become an even smarter choice for active families with pets. Earlier this year Mohawk enhanced this popular carpet with All Pet Protection, the only warranty and protection system that covers all pets, all accidents, all the time.



## Woodlands Luxury Vinyl Flooring

As the newest offering in Mohawk LVF, Woodlands is available in 11 realistic wood looks with deep embossing for life-like textures and three stone looks that appear to be newly chiseled from the earth. The Woodlands collection, designed and manufactured in the U.S., displays Mohawk's dedication to design, quality and American craftsmanship.



## Rare Vintage Laminate

With the Rare Vintage collection, Mohawk introduces the next generation of laminate flooring. The sophisticated appearance of reclaimed hardwood can be found in this collection featuring heavily textured chestnuts and rustic oaks. These planks are available in 7½-inch widths on a 12mm premium platform. Rare Vintage is created with ArmorMax technology giving it twice the durability and wear protection compared to floors without ArmorMax.



LEAD WITH THE BRAND THAT HAS IT ALL

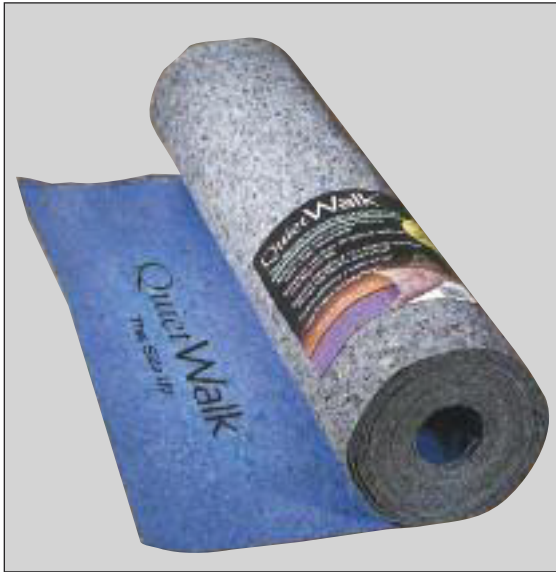


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# MP GLOBAL



### QuietWalk Premium Acoustical Underlayment

Made from 94% recycled materials, QuietWalk provides a host of benefits for floating floors. The absorbing action from the team of fibers, together with the thermally attached vapor barrier, provides a complete, all-in-one moisture protecting and sound-controlling underlayment. QuietWalk is backed by a limited lifetime warranty.

### Insulayment Acoustical Underlayment

Designed as an isolation barrier to dampen impact noise going from an upper living area to lower sections, Insulayment uses recycled materials that are VOC free to accomplish excellent sound ratings. Glued- or nailed-down wood floors are approved floor covering materials for Insulayment.



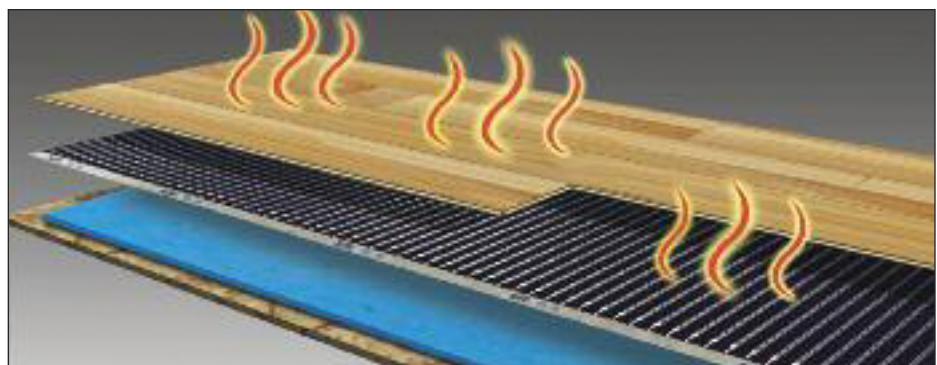
### Sound Buffer

Sound Buffer is a high-value, multi-use underlayment especially designed for glue-down and floating luxury vinyl planks and tiles. Boasting excellent acoustical ratings, it exceeds the standard for high-rise installations. In addition, Sound Buffer controls impact sound and floor-to-ceiling noise while helping minimize impressions and indentations that can occur with LVT.



### QuietWarmth Radiant Heat Film

Featuring conductive ink strips embedded in a thin, flexible film, QuietWarmth distributes gentle heat to floors and adds comfort to any room. Installation is a breeze, and there is no need for messy self levelers; just roll out the mats and have an electrician make the final connections.





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# QUICK-STEP



## LVF

While competitors' LVF is typically water resistant, Quick-Step's luxury vinyl floors are waterproof. Quick-Step's fashion-driven LVF offers the most sophisticated premium looks and textures in tandem with proven dimensional stability, wear resistance, easy installation and low maintenance.



## Envique

Quick-Step's Envique laminate collection has been expanded to include two additions: Woodland oak and Dutch oak. These elegant, dark, burnished brown décors feature deep embossed-in-register, subtle soft-scraped textures, sawn-cut effects and realistic chatter marks as well as Envique's 24-hour Spill Protection assurance.



## Elevae

Quick-Step's Elevae laminate collection offers the beauty and visual charm of reclaimed hardwood in six unique décors featuring rich surface textures and a subtle color palette. European vintage oak, coastal pine and rustic character oak designs are featured on 12mm thick, extra-long, 54-inch planks that are 6 $\frac{1}{8}$ -inches wide to deliver realism and expansive style.



## Elongé

Quick-Step's Q-Wood Elongé collection offers luxurious premium engineered hardwood featuring two of today's hottest trends: longer/wider planks and wire-brushed surfaces. Elongé offers both of these attributes in a spectrum of fashion-forward colors.



Enrique™ Tuxedo Pine



Q-Wood™ Elongé™ Carriage Oak

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# SCHÖNOX



## Schönox APF

Special dust-reducing properties within Schönox APF, a synthetic gypsum-fiber reinforced, self-leveling compound, allow the product to be mixed inside installation sites with minimal dust. Synthetic gypsum is made from the by-product of the process used to purify emissions from power plants, making the use of Schönox APF an environmentally responsible choice that contributes to LEED credits. Schönox APF cures to 6200psi and can support any resilient flooring material.



## Schönox EPA

Even subfloors with residual moisture readings of 100% relative humidity can be successfully mitigated with Schönox EPA, a two-component, epoxy-based system that contributes to LEED credits. Schönox SL, a cement-based smoothing and finishing compound, can be applied directly to Schönox EPA without priming, thereby reducing subfloor preparation work.



## Schönox Roll and Go

Schönox Roll and Go is a fully integrated, rollable acrylic adhesive designed for use with LVT. The Roll and Go kit includes the primer, adhesive and rollers needed for flooring installation. The rolling application process allows installers to apply the product from a standing position, and the adhesive binds tile immediately.



## Schönox SL

Going beyond its strong product credentials as a patching and smoothing compound with true high-performance feather-edge capabilities, Schönox SL is moisture resistant, allowing it to perform where some patches break apart and release from the subfloor.



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- FLOOR LEVELING COMPOUNDS AND UNDERLAYMENTS
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- ADHESIVES



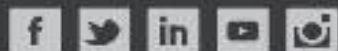
\*A true Schönox enthusiast. Not a paid actor.

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Schönox produces primers, repair products, floor leveling compounds, waterproofing materials, and adhesives that can successfully take damaged, uneven subfloors through to finished floors ready for use. We work daily to develop solutions that are innovative with regard to performance as well as environmental stewardship.

In the past, subfloors could often be overlooked. Now, no one should want to overlook them. We know how important a properly prepared subfloor is to the successful outcome of any flooring installation. Broken concrete, uneven surfaces, cracks, pits, excess moisture, etc. are problems facing nearly every project. Schönox products are a wise investment in solving these issues. Our products ensure the final result will be a subfloor ready for any application, while saving you time, money, and hassle. Our team is ready to assist you with your next flooring challenge. Let us know how we can help.

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# SHAW FLOORS



## Floorté: Alto Mix

Alto Mix is an extension of the popular Floorté Alto collection introduced earlier this year. With its staggering lengths, Alto is designed to address the current consumer trend of longer and wider planks. Alto Mix takes that visual to the next level by offering it in 3-, 5- and 8-inch-wide planks packaged together in the same carton for easy accessibility and installation.



## LifeGuard Carpet

Happy Go Lucky features an organic visual with a neutral color line designed to coordinate with popular hard surface hues. The product is visually stunning with its high design appearance and features Shaw's premium Anso nylon along with R2X, the ultimate in stain and soil resistance, and the exclusive LifeGuard waterproof backing system.



## Epic: Addison Maple

The inspiration for Addison Maple originated from the aged and distressed looks found in vintage hardwood floors. The rich undertone creates harmony and balance between the natural movement of rustic maple wood grain and the subtleties of authentic age and character. Addison Maple features Shaw's exclusive Epic Plus Stabilitek core, built for high performance and lasting durability.



## Cut-A-Rug: Ornamental

The bold new look of this large-scale fretwork design will excite design-savvy customers with its 20 rich colors. The sophisticated cut and loop design makes this carpet both comfortable and easy to maintain. Perfect for both wall-to-wall installations and Cut-A-Rug applications, this patterned carpet makes a design statement in either traditional or modern interiors.

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### Authentic Plank

Southwind's latest WPC launch is Authentic Plank, a 9 x 60-inch waterproof plank with an upgraded high-density core, v-groove painted bevel and detailed EIR embossing for it a truly authentic look.

### Harvest Plank

Harvest Plank is a 3mm dry back vinyl plank with a 20 mil wear layer. Harvest features a hand-scraped texture offering an upgraded look and a v-groove painted bevel for easier installation.



### Aurora Collection

The Aurora collection features a super-soft array of Forever Soft PET carpets with dazzling highlights of color reflection in timeless, natural palettes: Ambience, Light Show, Northern Lights and Radiant Beauty.



### Sosoft Nylon

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# URBAN FLOOR



## Chêne: Cabernet

Chêne is a collection of European oak hardwood flooring. Each extra-long and wide 7.5-inch plank is artfully wire-brushed and then enhanced with a vigorous, multi-layer finishing process to ensure floors will be as durable as they are attractive.



## Villa Caprisi Trentino

Villa Caprisi is inspired by world-renowned Italian design. Ultra wide and extra long, this distinctive collection is offered in a brushed, European white oak. Whether it be hand ground or smooth texture, stained or smoked finish, every piece is hand crafted, creating a signature look with no repetitions between planks.



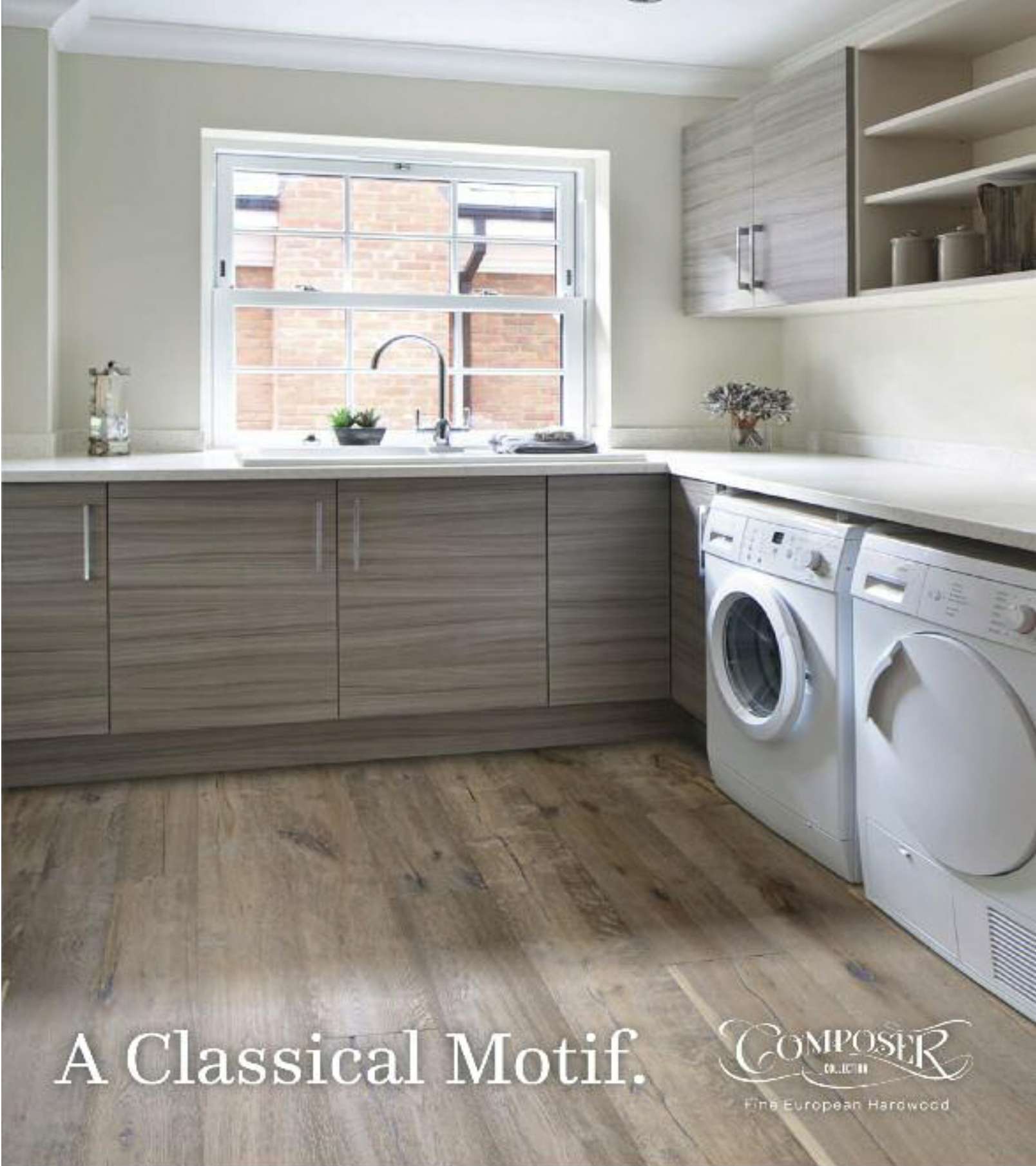
## Composer Collection: Bach

The Composer collection captures the look and feel of reclaimed hardwood floors, enhanced with the performance of engineered flooring. The brushed grain surface treatment features a mix of filled and unfilled knots, natural splits, mineral streaks and bow tie inlays, capturing the rich, timeless beauty of historic colonial estates.



## Mountain Country: Denali

The Mountain Country collection recalls an earlier era of rugged simplicity, adventure and character. This hand-crafted line of custom flooring carries a sense of Old West individualism. With natural wood grain, distressed textures and rich hues, each plank is one of a kind.



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# US FLOORS



## Smoked Rustic Pine

Smoked Rustic Pine from the COREtec Plus HD collection employs embossed in register and high-definition print technology along with a four-sided, deep enhanced bevel edge for a realistic hardwood visual. And like all other COREtec offerings, the HD collection is waterproof, pet proof and kid proof. The line is available in 15 SKUs.



## Accolade Oak

The new Design collection offers multi-width and multi-tone planks and tiles to create a floor that resembles a work of art. Accolade Oak is one of 10 SKUs in the Design collection. As with all patented COREtec Plus flooring, it is 100% waterproof, kid proof and pet proof.



## Olympus Contempo Oak

Olympus Contempo Oak is from the COREtec Plus HD collection and features distinct high-definition imagery combined with registered embossing and enhanced beveled edges to give the look of genuine hardwood. There are 15 SKUs in the collection.



## Divergence Oak

Divergence Oak from the COREtec Plus Design collection represents the latest innovation in WPC flooring. Design employs embossing technology in multi-tone and multi-width planks and tiles while continuing to offer patented innovative technology.





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 US FLOORS

## Installation

# Hardwood and excessive moisture seldom mix

More than 90% of all floor coverings installed in the lower Southeast U.S.—especially Florida—are laid down over a concrete slab. That means installers need to be particularly aware of problems and potential failures related to excess moisture.

When my family's company relocated to Florida and first began 24-7 Floors in Sarasota, we had to learn many new installation techniques as a result of a simple change in geography. We initially saw many issues with laminate and even sheet vinyl flooring as it related to the levels of moisture present in the concrete. These include everything from discoloration to expansion. In 2016, however, we are now seeing a huge rash of hardwood flooring failures as that product category has become very popular in our region over the last several years. In recent

weeks I have conducted inspections at several different hardwood installations that revealed problems from minor discoloration or bubbling to complete failure in at least three cases.



Scott Perron

For those installers who have been putting these products down without moisture testing or applying the proper moisture mitigation solutions, you need to be aware of the potential financial repercussions.

Recently I had an interesting conversation with an NWEA certified inspector who openly told me most companies that install hardwood flooring materials that

are glued directly to the concrete are not following the proper procedures for testing or mitigation prior to installation. Surprisingly, he said, this is not limited to the “bucket-and-trowel” guys; full-line flooring retailers are guilty as well. Too many times the dealer pins

their hopes on a premium adhesive as a cure-all to moisture, but the fine print changes that in a hurry. Many of the worst cases I have seen personally are the result of purchases made at supply-only outlet centers who do not take responsibility for the installation, only the sale of the product.

We have compiled a library of pictures that show these failures, and we are educating each of our customers on the proper procedures for installation whether we provide labor or just materials. We discuss the proper process for testing, mitigation and adhesives, and we inform the customer that we will not put these materials down unless the process is followed the correct way. We learned our lesson the hard way: One of our only installation issues happened on a job that failed in 13 months due to moisture. Prior to the installation, I decided not to test this home because it already had glue-down wood in the main living area so when we removed the old floors and added the adjacent areas we thought we were in the clear. But we were wrong; there were signs of excessive moisture in the other perimeter rooms. As a result of my mistake, I promised the customer a full replacement; we absorbed the costs. To my surprise, the customer was very understanding and actually added other areas which helped offset our claim.

Recently I had a long discussion with a friend who is a top executive for a well-known hardwood supplier. He shared a few failure stories of his own regarding situations where his company's products were improperly installed in some sizable projects resulting in the flooring contractor being sued and ultimately forced to close his doors. Being the low bidder in that scenario was disastrous.

Although this is a challenge we feel will be a growing concern as we move into the future, it spells opportunity for a quality contractor to supply, install and correct the various issues that may arise. Bottom line: If you are not currently 100% schooled in the art of hardwood installation or proper testing of substrates, there are many classes available for you to get these skills honed. When these services are executed correctly, hardwood flooring can be one of the most profitable segments in your business. However, if you are taking a shotgun approach to providing installation of these products without following the industry standards, a few sizable claims could place your company in jeopardy.

Scott Perron is the CEO of 24-7 Floors based in Sarasota, Fla. He is also a motivational speaker. He can be reached at [scott@24-7floors.com](mailto:scott@24-7floors.com)

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# Addressing misperceptions about tile and stone

*Editor's note: The following Q&As were reprinted with permission from the Ceramic Tile and Stone Consultants, CTaSC, which provides expert witness and forensic failure investigation services. In addition, CTaSC provides quality control services for products and installation methods, testing services, online and classroom training, market research and outsourcing services.*



Donato Pompo

## Hollow sounds in ceramic, porcelain

**We are in the process of doing a remodel and we had installed porcellanato, a plank-style flooring. After installation we noticed several hollow locations when we tap on the porcellanato tile. This flooring was installed on an existing concrete slab where existing ceramic tile was removed. We are being told it was installed on a mud slab. Is this hollow sound normal and can there be potential lifting of the tile in the future?**

First of all, hollow-sounding tiles is not considered a defect. There are no standards addressing hollow sounds, other than to say hollow sounds don't necessarily mean it is a problem. Hollow sounds can be an indication of a deficiency, particularly if some tiles or parts of tiles sound hollow and other parts do not. It could also be an indication that there are voids or loose tile or something else loose within the tile assembly. In some cases, hollow sounds can be an indication of the type of material or the substrate configuration underneath the tile.

Based on your description, the hollow sounds could be coming from the original mortar bed on the concrete slab. If it is an unbonded mortar bed with a cleavage membrane and wire reinforcement suspended within, then it would tend to sound hollow. You would expect it all to sound hollow in that case. But if the mortar bed was a bonded mortar bed to the concrete slab and some of it debonded from the concrete slab for some reason, that could cause some spots to sound hollow. If this is the case it is possible that the mortar bed is stable and will perform well. The only way to make sure is to remove a few tiles in various sounding conditions for verification.

ANSI A108.5 standard for installing floor tiles states the average uniform contact area shall not be less than 80% contact except on exterior or shower applications, which should

have 95% contact. The standard states the 80% or 95% coverage shall be sufficiently distributed to give full support to the tile with particular attention to this support under all corners of the tile.

According to *TCNA 2016 Handbook* and the MIA, for natural stone the minimum coverage is 95% with no voids exceeding 2 square inches (about the size of a golf ball) and no voids within 2 inches of the corners. All edges of the stone are to be fully supported.

Where there are excessive voids the tile is susceptible to damage if something heavy is dropped on it or something is moved over it with a heavy concentrated load.

The ANSI A108.5 standard does say "average uniform contact" and "sufficiently distributed to give full support" regarding the thin-set adhesive between the back of the tile and its substrate. On that basis, large voids under the tile is not acceptable. Spot bonding of tile that only gives partial contact leaving large voids is not an acceptable method for tile installed on floors with thin-set mortars.

## Is spot binding tile acceptable?

**I recently had my bathroom remodeled. The contractor used the spot setting method on the tub/shower surround. I asked him about the honeycomb of voids this was leaving behind the tiles and the potential of water getting behind them. He said the grout would take care of that. I'm worried that over time I'm going to have problems with water build up or the tiles coming off the walls. Through researching the Internet I found this type of tile setting should be banned. Is my concern a valid one or am I worrying for nothing?**

Spot bonding tile is not a legitimate method for installing ceramic tile, including porcelain tile—which is a type of ceramic tile—or stone tile, unless an epoxy adhesive is used in an interior vertical dry application. With spot bonding, the installer applies spots of adhesive at various spots on the back of the tile which leaves substantial voids behind the tile. This results in adhesive contact that is substantially less than the requirements of having at least 80% evenly distributed contact with full support at edges and corners for residential applications. For interior wet areas or exterior

applications, or for commercial floor applications, you should have at least 95% adhesive contact that doesn't have any voids greater than 2 square inches with full support at the edges and corners.

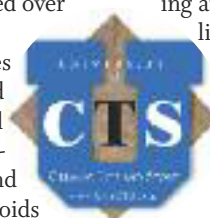
Normally a honeycomb appearance of the adhesive is due to the installer applying the adhesive to the back of the tile in one direction and then applying the adhesive to the substrate in the opposite direction without properly embedding the tile to prevent voids. This condition can also result in excessive voids in the back of the tile.

One problem with spot bonding on floors is wherever there are voids under the tile it makes the tile vulnerable to cracking or crushing at those spots if they are subjected to a live point load. The unsupported corners and edges of floor tiles are particularly more vulnerable to damage. It also can cause the tile floor to have hollow sounds wherever the voids are located.

Another problem with spot bonding is whatever percentage of voids you have under the tile, you have diminished the potential bond strength of that tile by the same percentage. So the tile will be less resistant to various stresses. A problem with spot bonding in exterior or interior wet areas is water can collect behind the tile in the voids, so the voids become a reservoir of moisture that then excessively subjects the tile to moisture. This can lead to efflorescence staining, microbial growth, freeze/thaw damage in some geographic locations and spalling in natural stone. Note: A porous cementitious grout will not prevent water from migrating through the grout to the back of the tile.

The Tile Council of North American (TCNA) *Handbook for Ceramic, Glass and Stone Tile Installation* has TCNA Method W215-16 Ceramic Tile and W260-16 Stone for Spot-Bonding Stone with Epoxy adhesive for wall applications. These standards only recommend this method for interior dry applications. This is where only about 10% of the back of the tile is bonded with an epoxy that will potentially achieve a bond strength attachment that is about four times greater than a typical modified thin-set mortar.

*Donato Pompo, CTC CMR CSI CDT MBA, is the founder of CTaSC and a leading tile and stone forensic expert and consultant in North America.*





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If interested, please contact Nadia at [nadia@fcnews.net](mailto:nadia@fcnews.net) and refer to box #920.

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- High level of honesty and integrity
- A strong desire to do what is necessary to earn a very high level of compensation

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**SALES REPRESENTATIVE WANTED**

Quality Carpet & Vinyl is one of the fastest growing companies in the flooring industry. We are seeking experienced sales representatives, in the Metro-Atlanta area, to maintain professional relationships with current clients as well as mine for new business in the apartment communities, single family homes, senior living centers and new construction markets. We pride ourselves in doing things right the first time! Please submit resumes to: [wbean@qvinc.com](mailto:wbean@qvinc.com). All inquiries will be kept in strict confidence.

**SALES AGENTS**

Excellent opportunity awaits you. Major new flooring manufacturer is seeking sales agents in WA, MT, OR, ND, SD, NE, MN, WI, IA, IL. Qualified applicants can call 1.800.868.2194 ext. 301 or mail their resume to: ATM Floor Covering, Inc., P.O. Box 1012, Dalton, GA 30722 or email: [kyle@atmfloorcovering.com](mailto:kyle@atmfloorcovering.com)

**SALES AGENTS**

Himalaya Carpets has recently opened it's US distribution center in Southern California.

We are a major supplier of wool and synthetic carpets in 15 different countries.

Our company is currently taking applications for sales agents across the US for both our wool and synthetic divisions. Please email your resume to [kent.e.elliott@gmail.com](mailto:kent.e.elliott@gmail.com) for review.

**DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING**

Derr Flooring Co, one of the nation's largest and oldest wood flooring distributors, is seeking a director of sales and marketing to help the company achieve our goal of significant growth over the next decade. The position reports directly to ownership.

Responsibilities include managing the outside sales team, working with suppliers to create and implement sales programs and working with ownership to evaluate and modify product mix. Requirements: A minimum of 10 years of sales experience in the flooring industry with at least 3 years of management experience.

A bachelor's degree, or higher is desirable.

A competitive salary and benefit package accompanies this position.

Interested parties should send their resume to: Chet Derr III. at [cderr@derrflooring.com](mailto:cderr@derrflooring.com)



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