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NEW CARPETS AND INDOOR AIR QUALITY - RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

Recently news reports both locally and nationally have created concern and heightened awareness toward the question of whether new carpets emit irritating or toxic chemicals into the indoor atmosphere. These reports have been highlighted by the research of one small laboratory in Massachusetts, Anderson Laboratories. Anderson Laboratories recently conducted tests on carpet samples received from consumers said to have health problems and new carpet samples. The tests have shown an unexplained linkage between certain carpet samples and ill health effects in mice. According to the United States Environmental Protection Agency Pamphlet - Indoor Air Quality and New Carpet: "Limited research to date has found no link between adverse health effects and the levels of chemicals emitted by new carpet." No one really knows for sure what future research will find. However, what we do know is that the carpet industry and government agencies are going to do more research to get the facts about what is really taking place and what changes, if any need to take place. You can be sure Steam Way will be involved and will keep you informed!

As a professional cleaner and a part of the carpet value chain, your customers may ask you about these issues. It is important to only tell them what is known. You can get more information about new carpet odors from the following brochures:

- A Guide To Carpet and Your Indoor Environment (CRI Publication)
- CRI Indoor Air Quality Program For Carpet
- Indoor Air Quality and New Carpet: What You Should Know (EPA Publication)
- Carpet/Indoor Air Quality Fact Sheet (CRI Publication)
- Carpet and Its Positive Contributions To The Indoor Environment (PCUCA Publication)

All of these brochures are available from Steam Way International who is a member of the CRI. There is no charge for these brochures to professional cleaners who are active customers of Steam Way.

Steam Way has and will continue to stay right up to date on what is taking place. We are working with several organizations to assure that we get copies of all news media reports and important publications. At this point, what is it that we do know?

- There are billion yards of installed wall-to-wall carpeting that is being enjoyed by its owners and has caused no known ill health effects.
- Does ill health effects on mice translate to any adverse effects on humans? We don't know!
- If the possibility exists that exposure to chemicals emitted from new carpet is detrimental, why do we not see a high morbidity or mortality rate amongst carpet mill employees and carpet retailers and installers who are constantly exposed to these chemicals? These people have closed environment and hot air environment exposure to carpet on a constant basis.
- There are people who have experienced ill health effects in conjunction with the installation of new carpet. Are they particularly sensitive or are these truly bad carpets? We don't know.
- Anderson Laboratories has had mice show ill health effects, and even die when exposed to the fumes from some carpets in a testing system that was designed by Anderson Laboratories. They have refused to release any of these "toxic" samples to any government agency or carpet industry laboratory. They do not know what chemical that is emitted from these carpets might be harming or killing these mice.

So what role do you as a professional cleaner play besides carpet consumer education? We do know that carpets do emit a strong odor when they are new. These odors are mainly caused by a chemical called 4-PCH(4-Phenylcyclohexene). There are known procedures that have been demonstrated to reduce or eliminate these odors in new carpeting. If you have a carpet consumer that

is complaining about the odors from their new carpeting, there are steps that you can take as a professional cleaner to help alleviate the situation and provide a valuable service to your customer:

1. Open doors and windows as frequently as possible during and after installation. Consider the use of window fans, room air conditioners, and other means to exhaust emissions to the outdoors.
2. Consider the use of high volume air movers and turbodryers to provide massive ventilation and air movement across the carpet to provide a capillary action to increase the speed of off gassing of odors from the carpet. Provide for massive ventilation and exhaust of this air to the outside environment.
3. For best results, use truck mounted hot water extraction carpet cleaning equipment (Portable equipment may be used, but higher solution pressures and solution temperatures are important) to provide the carpet with a fresh water rinsing of the carpet paying special attention to your solution temperature (130°F solution temperature at the carpet will provide the best results). The rinsing of the carpet is enhanced, chemical off-gassing sped up, and some chemical and fiber residues removed by this rinsing process. Provide for massive ventilation and air flow during the cleaning process. Follow the cleaning by thoroughly venting and exhausting the indoor air to the outdoors. Cleaning with professional truck mounted equipment accomplishes high volume air indoor to outdoor air exchange. Maximize drying of carpet before leaving.
4. These procedures have been used and demonstrated in many circumstances to reduce new carpet odors and alleviate consumer complaints.

Your role as a professional cleaner should be to provide factual information and serve to assist consumers with their questions. We will continue to keep you updated.