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1993 Technical Bulletins

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TB9318 - Revised October 1993

DO YOU REALLY NEED TO ACID RINSE OR ACID TREAT A CARPET AS PART OF THE CARPET CLEANING PROCESS?

There is a lot of discussion these days about low residue cleaning and the best way to achieve it. A step that some chemical manufacturers have begun to advocate is to use an acid based rinsing detergent. The theory behind this is simple. Since we are primarily using alkaline based cleaning solutions, when we rinse we want to leave a neutral pH on the fiber. This concept, although it is being marketed that way, is not a new one. We have long used acid treatments in the cleaning of delicate and natural fabrics to prevent browning and promote colorfastness. When carpets primarily used jute backing, and prespray technology was not used, acid rinsing was an important step in preventing browning. This is old chemistry however. Carpets have changed. Dye technology has changed. Mill applied topical treatments have changed. Another step that some are advocating is the use of a post spray acid treatment that is sprayed topically on the fabric after cleaning. Now, the concept of an acid treatment is being widely marketed by several chemical suppliers in our industry. They almost leave the professional cleaner with the impression that if he/she doesn't use their acid treatment, then they are causing problems to the carpet and are not doing as good of a cleaning job. Our professional response to this is simple:

HOGWASH, BALDERDASH, NONSENSE, FALDERAL, HORSEFEATHERS ,AND POPPYCOCK!

One has to question what the supposed benefits of an acid rinse or an acid treatment are. Then we can analyze the validity of those claims. One alleged benefit is that acid rinsing leaves less residue after cleaning. The **truth is that an acid rinse or an acid treatment does not leave any less total residue!** Applying a topical acid treatment without a rinsing step would not leave less residue. It might even leave more residue. **A second truth of understanding is that, from an indoor air quality point-of-view , there is no such thing as good residue!** The most important point is the total amount of residue that we are leaving. pH neutralization from an acid treatment or a topical treatment is simply not needed and is not an issue on synthetic carpets when you are using lower pH chemicals to clean with in the first place. From a chemistry standpoint, resoiling is caused by the amount of residue left, not whether a neutral pH of that residue has been achieved. Another supposed benefit of an acid rinse or treatment is that it promotes colorfastness Synthetic carpets do not have problems with dyes being stable. Dye and color stabilization is an issue on some delicate natural fabrics, but not on synthetic carpets. Instead of being concerned about dye stabilization, mills are concerned with how cleaning chemistry affects their products in other ways. They are concerned about residue and its contributions to resoiling. They are concerned about cleaning chemistry and its effect on stain resistant treatments. They are concerned about cleaning chemistry and its contributions to yellowing. It's funny that the companies that are promoting the absolute necessity of an acid treatment or rinse seem to have appointed themselves as experts about the best way to clean a carpet. **They have not even considered the fact that the world's largest carpet manufacturer, Shaw Industries, has the most advanced technical services lab for analysis in the world. They tested the Steam Way process of cleaning carpet and found it to be so outstanding, they recommended it. Why? Because it left the least amount of residue, and because it used lower pH chemistry to clean in the first place.**

The reason that some chemical manufacturers have gone to advocating an acid rinse or an acid treatment is because the concentrated pH of their presprays are high. Steam Way agrees with the ASTM, Carpet Fiber Producer, and Carpet Mill standpoint that we are just as concerned about the concentrated pH of a cleaning chemical as we are about the final dilution pH. The residue that is left behind from a cleaning chemical will always return to its concentrated pH as the water evaporates. Therefore Steam Way

makes sure that its concentrated pH on its chemicals are what are examined. If a company uses an unbuffered high pH is its prespray chemistry, it may advocate an acid rinse because it has to neutralize the high pH of the residue that is left behind. Another factor to consider is the IICRC Cleaning Standards. The entire industry had input to developing these standards. You will note that there is no mention of a need for an acid rinse to reduce residue. It only talks about rinsing, period. If acid rinsing or treatment was deemed as necessary by a majority of the industry, don't you think it would have said so?

At Steam Way, we promote a simple A-B-C method of cleaning. Step A is the application of a preconditioning chemical whose pH and makeup are best for the fiber being cleaned. Step B is "rinsing" the preconditioning chemical, soil, grease, and other deposits out of the carpet using the extraction equipment with a rinsing or "primary" cleaning detergent. Steam Way has a complete line of presprays and rinsing detergents for the professional cleaner. They are designed to be used together to provide the best cleaning job with the least amount of residue. So have fiber producers and carpet mills. Step C is to apply appropriate spotting solutions to the remaining problem areas. We have thoroughly tested this process. The concept of an acid rinse or treatment just does not provide an added benefit on synthetic carpeting.

Let's talk about the concept of a fiber rinse for just a moment. On delicate natural carpet and upholstery fabrics, many companies advocate the use of an acid rinse or acid treatment as part of the cleaning process. This includes Steam Way. However, an acid rinse or treatment as part of the cleaning process on synthetic carpets is simply not necessary. Now with all of this in mind, keep in mind the following; there is certainly nothing wrong with acid rinsing as a part of the cleaning process apart from the disadvantages of having very little or no cleaning power in the rinsing phase. An acid topical treatment may actually leave slightly more residue. Let us restate our point. If you want to use an acid detergent rinse, there is nothing wrong with it. It is not however the most efficient way to clean a carpet and it does not leave less overall residue than a Steam Way prespray and detergent combination. However, if you want to do an acid rinse or an acid treatment, there is no need to add another product to your inventory. Because of its unique formulation, STEAM WAY FORMULA "D" can be used effectively as an acid rinse. If you wish to do this and you own a truck mount, mix 32 ounces of STEAM WAY FORMULA "D" with 5 gallons of water and set your solution flow meter at 2 to 3. If you are using a portable mix 2 ounces with 5 gallons of water.

Now that you have this cleared up, don't be afraid to learn more about cleaning delicate natural fabrics, and how acid based treatments and rinses can assist your ability to safely and effectively clean them. For now, you can have complete confidence that when you prespray and rinse with a Steam Way Process, you are providing the most effective, low residue cleaning system possible for synthetic carpets.