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THE MILLIKEN - CAPTURE® CONNECTION - WHAT'S A PROFESSIONAL CLEANER SUPPOSED TO DO?

The story always sounds the same. On the other end of the phone is an extremely frustrated professional carpet cleaner or building service contractor. He/She has a customer or potential customer that is telling the same story. Their potential customer has had a Milliken carpet installed in their building, and is now being told by a Milliken or Millicare® representative that they should have their carpeting cleaned by an authorized Millicare® representative using the Capture® cleaning compound. Therefore, the professional cleaner or building service contractor starts from a competitive disadvantage in their attempt to clean their carpets. Unfortunately, this story repeats itself time and time again. What's worse is that the story gets deeper and more complicated.

Milliken is, according to recent sales figures the tenth largest carpet manufacturer in the United States. They have done a very good job of manufacturing a quality product. They are one of the leading manufacturers of carpet tiles and have a strong competitive position in the commercial carpet market. Milliken also makes an absorbent cleaning compound (sometimes called a dry powder cleaning compound) called Capture®. Capture® is one of the two top selling absorbent compounds. Milliken recommends that Capture® be used as the cleaning system for their carpeting. Since they make the cleaning compound, it only makes sense that they would recommend it for their carpeting. That recommendation is also their legal right. The problem lies in the fact that there is a difference between requiring and recommending. More often than not, there appears to be a direct tie made by a Milliken representative, between using the Capture® system and retaining the warranty protection for the carpeting. This is where the problem starts.

Have you ever tried to get something in writing from Milliken? It has been difficult for us. Most of their communication about cleaning their carpeting seems to only take place verbally. In the latter part of 1991 Steam Way attempted to open a dialogue with Milliken to discuss concerns that we had in reference to how their cleaning recommendations were being communicated. We asked them to answer a simple question, "If a professional cleaner cleans a Milliken carpet with hot water extraction carpet cleaning, does it properly, and according to IICRC Standard S001-1991, will it effect Milliken's warranty coverage?" They would not respond to this request. We have never asked Milliken to recommend hot water extraction cleaning or the Steam Way system. We simply want to know whether hot water extraction cleaning, if performed properly by a trained, certified professional cleaner, can be used on a Milliken Carpet without affecting warranty coverage.

Since we did our initial investigations of this confusing picture in 1991, not much has changed. Not a week goes by that we don't hear from another confused, frustrated professional cleaner who fears they are being denied a fair opportunity to perform a cleaning job. So what is a professional cleaner to do? Here are some basic understandings and courses of action you may want to consider if confronted by a situation like this:

1. Understand The Difference Between Recommending, Requiring, and Recognizing - Some cleaners have made the mistake of thinking that the Milliken-Capture® connection is no different from other recommendations made by carpet mills on maintenance toward a particular cleaning method, system, or company. Examples of these might include Cumberland Mills recommending Bane Clene®; or Du Pont's requirement for periodic hot water extraction on StainMaster® X-tra Life and MasterLife; or Shaw Industries recommending Steam Way International; or White Crest Carpet Mills recommending Host®; or Hollytex recommending IICRC Certified Cleaners. In all of these cases, the manufacturer is either recommending or recognizing a particular method or system. In the case of Du Pont, they are requiring a specific system as part of their warranty coverage, but they are not prohibiting other systems. But there are significant differences between these situations and what Milliken does.

None of these companies make a cleaning product or system, or choose only one cleaning company per area that uses that cleaning product. When Milliken recommends or requires the use of Capture®, you have to remember that they make the product itself.

2. Out of the top 10 mills in terms of sales of carpet, Milliken is the ONLY one which does not recommend or recognize that hot water extraction cleaning, properly done by a trained professional as an acceptable cleaning method that will not affect warranty coverage. Milliken is also the only top 10 mill that makes a cleaning product.
3. Milliken provides a protected territory for their Millicare® dealers. Chances are that if you called them and told them you wanted to add Capture® as an additional cleaning method for your company, they would not allow you to become a Millicare® Dealer. They make the cleaning product and choose the company that is allowed to apply it.
4. Milliken consistently will tell owners of Milliken carpet something, but never will supply it in writing. Why don't they just come out and say, "Capture® is required", in writing?. As long as it can be used as an implied threat, there isn't much you can do to reassure the carpet owner of what can be done on their carpet and they still maintain the warranty on their carpet.
5. There is often a misunderstanding about who possesses what warranties. For example, when Milliken uses Du Pont Antron® nylon fiber or has a StainMaster® warranted carpet, many of the warranties belong to Du Pont. I think we can safely assume that Milliken does not want to assume Du Pont's warranties. Usually, the texture retention, anti-static, and stain resistant warranties on a Milliken carpet belong to Du Pont. Du Pont allows hot water extraction to be used on their fibers. Make sure that a Milliken carpet owner understands that if it contains a branded Du Pont nylon, some of the warranties belong to Du Pont.
6. Understand that Milliken has a lot of clout with commercial buildings who install their carpet, as they should. They made the high quality carpet. They take an active role in trying to set up regular maintenance programs using Capture®. The property manager, company owner, or both are directly dealt with by Milliken after sales support and service. It is during this time that they convey the concept of how the warranty coverage and after sales service and support may be affected if they do not use Capture®.
7. In some of its own literature that has been published in the past, Milliken has recommended a hot water rinse of carpets where severe soiling has taken place.

"Restorative Carpet Cleaning - Milliken's Maintenance Recommendation is Capture® along with spot cleaning, vacuuming, and pile lifting on specific frequencies related to each facility. However, on occasions when carpet has been improperly maintained, excessively soiled from detergent residue, exposed to concentrated oily soiling normally associated in restaurants/manufacturing facilities or abnormal soiling due to climatic conditions, Milliken suggests a hot-water extraction unit be used for restorative cleaning. We recommend plain hot-water (not to exceed 160° F) be used in this procedure to remove as much detergent residue, soil, or debris as possible. Upon drying, the carpet should be thoroughly pile lifted, vacuumed, spot and Capture® cleaned on a regular frequency in accordance with Milliken's Maintenance Recommendations." Milliken Maintenance Recommendation Paper

"Are there times when Capture® should not be used?"

"Capture® should not be used on wet carpet. Also, if carpet fibers are matted with dirt and soap residue, we recommend hot water extraction prior to using Capture®."

Capture® Carpet Cleaning System Brochure

8. The best defense is a good offense. If your company is ever confronted with a situation whereby you think you are being unfairly denied the opportunity to bid on a commercial cleaning job because the carpet is made by Milliken and they are requiring the use of Capture®, these are the steps that we recommend:
 - A. Maintain a professional demeanor and possess the poise of a person who is knowledgeable about carpet cleaning programs.

- B. Make the property owner or manager fully aware that you understand what Milliken might have said to them. You are there to provide information and provide the opportunity for that property manager to make the best decision based upon all the information.
- C. If the property manager has received specific instructions concerning maintenance from a Milliken representative, tell them that they should demand to have it in writing and have the Milliken representative back it up with his own signature on the documentation. If they won't put it in writing, ask for an explanation as to why.
- D. Explain your knowledge and understanding of carpet cleaning methods, systems, and programs. Inform them that the industry has standards for carpet cleaning (IICRC S001-1991) and even offer to obtain them a copy. Inform them that Milliken Chemical (the manufacturer of Capture®) was a participant in the development of those standards.
- E. Make the property manager aware of all of the surrounding circumstances by informing them of the information in this article, parts 1 through 7.
- F. Seek a meeting between the Milliken representative, the property manager, and yourself to discuss the situation. Write down any direct statements that the Milliken representative makes about the warranty and ask him/her to sign their name to those statements.
- G. Offer to do a side by side demonstration of your cleaning program in a soiled area with the Capture® system.
- H. If you still feel that you have been prevented the opportunity of bidding on the job, explain to them that you are willing to apply the Capture® product and obtain Milliken training on how to apply it. If Milliken won't sell you Capture®, you can purchase it at Sears and many carpet retailers.
- I. If you are still denied the opportunity to bid on the job, please make an accurate list of all of the steps that you have taken. Send a copy to Steam Way International and we will send you a questionnaire prepared by our attorneys that will collect some very relevant information.
- J. As a last resort, contact the Attorney General's office in the state that you are located in and/or the state you are trying to secure the opportunity to bid in. Given them a copy of this bulletin and your written documentation of what has gone on. Explain that you would like to know what your options are.

Above all, maintain your professionalism. Don't make rash statements. Speak confidently, logically, and carefully. All you are seeking is a more level playing field in the opportunity to perform your services. Do not speak negatively about Milliken or Capture®. Don't get discouraged, but do follow through. If you still want someone to help you, we would suggest that you call your local or national trade association. They can do much more than we can as a "competitor" to Capture®, in terms of approaching Milliken. Ask them what actions they are willing to take on your behalf (of course, you will need to be a member of that trade association). As you can see, there is plenty that you can do besides throwing up your hands and being upset. We wish you well.

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