



Consulting & Project Management

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COMMON CARPET FAQs

Q1. My carpet has stretched and the bubbles and ripples are becoming a trip hazard. Why has this happened?

A1. Often the carpet has not been correctly tensioned in installation. Secondary backing may not be heavy enough or adhered strongly enough to the body of the carpet.

Sometimes growth may be the result of humidity fluctuation which make the pile fibres swell and contract beyond the limits that the backing system and installation method can accommodate.

Q2. Can my stretched carpet be fixed permanently?

A2. If the carpet itself is not faulty, power stretching should remove the bubbles but if the carpet backing is weakened the carpet may stretch again.

Unfortunately, each time a broadloom carpet with a jute backing is stretched the secondary backing is weakened and the carpet becomes even more prone to stretching. After several re-stretch operations the secondary backing may be still attached and appear intact but it will have lost most of its strength and its elastic properties.

Q3. What is meant when they say a carpet has delaminated?

A3. This is a condition where one of the adhesive layers within the carpet fails and allows the use-surface to move independently of the rest of the backing. It is most common with tufted broadloom carpets, but can occur in modular carpets.

Q4. Can delaminated tufted carpet be repaired?

A4. Localised damage, e.g. by a caster chair, may be repairable but it is impossible to rectify carpet that is extensively delaminated.

Q5. Why do my carpet's seams look a bit fuzzy?

A5. Loop pile carpet seams are prone to look rough and fuzzy when traffic causes the parts of the pile to come away and protrude above the surface (sometimes called "tuft sprouting").

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Sprouting tufts should be napped off as soon as possible after they are seen to prevent them being snagged and pulled further out. In a new tufted broadloom installation, it is common for the installers to be called back to nap the seams again after a few weeks of use and vacuuming.

Q6. Why does the manufacturer refuse to guarantee my tufted carpet against caster chair damage?

A6. The progression of caster damage is related to the mass of the chair occupant, the time of use, and the user's working pattern. The manufacturer has no control over how the carpet is used or abused.

Repetitive movement of loaded chair wheels over the same part of a carpet first leaves a pattern of flattened and abraded pile and results in the breakdown of adhesives and the backing structure. Eventually this leads to delamination and the formation of ripples and rucks.

Q7. Is there an alternative strategy to using caster chair mats?

A7. Not if the tufted carpet is installed by the gripper method. Delamination and rucking will be avoided by direct-stick installation but the lack a cushion will accelerate the pile flattening effects.

Although not guaranteed, double-bond installation with a maximum cushion thickness of 5mm seems to reduce the rate of damage to the extent that only workstations where there is prolonged use or extra-heavy people will need chair mats.

Some better quality modular carpet is guaranteed suitable for caster chair use but not all modular carpet carries such a guarantee.

Q8. How can advanced caster chair damage be repaired?

A8. Once chair damaged becomes advanced it may be possible to extend the carpet's useful life by making patches with the attic stock (if there is any). If there is no attic stock it may be possible to use carpet from an isolated and little used room where a different carpet will not look out of place. Replacement carpet pieces must be large enough that there is little prospect of the loaded chair rolling over the new seams. This usually requires relocation of some of the furniture or work stations to do the work.

Repairs are likely to cost several hundred dollars per workstation so simply placing chair mats over faults as they develop is a cost-effective solution to a developing chair damage problem. This strategy will usually get a carpet that has no other performance challenges through to its normal replacement time.

Q9. Is it normal for a synthetic loop pile carpet to go fuzzy under the desks?

A9. No. If fuzzing occurs there is probably a deficiency in the compound that provided filament bond. When a filament that is not anchored well at both ends is snagged by something sliding across the surface, it tends not to break but to pull through the bundle of filaments that form the root of the tuft and leave a free floating filament above the main pile surface. As more filaments suffer this fate, the fuzziness becomes apparent.

Q10. Does a carpet that has a propensity to fuzz need to be replaced?

A10. The unsightly fuzz can be removed in situ with a micro-shearing machine; a small portable lawnmower-like machine. Occasionally a fuzzed carpet that has been shorn will develop fuzz again but usually the most vulnerable fibres will have been removed and the fuzz will not occur again. Excessive fuzzing is evidence of a manufacturing fault and the manufacturer is obligated to remedy it under the carpet warranty.

Q11. Why do the patterns of use by pedestrians have a duller and paler appearance even after steam cleaning?

A11. This is a condition sometimes known as “traffic lane greying”. The phenomenon is sometimes masked by tracked-in soil or polish and cleaning agents tracked out of amenities areas. However, particularly with some wool carpets, thorough wet cleaning removes the soil but leaves the traffic lanes still looking dull, grey and lifeless.

The causes of this difference in appearance may be:

1. Flattening of the fibres close to the carpet surface which results in them reflecting more light back at the viewer than is the case where such flattening has not taken place. More reflected light makes the carpet look paler.
2. Permanent distortion of the tufts or loops so that more yarn sides are seen in the trafficked areas compared to the pristine areas.
3. Severe abrasion of wool fibres to the degree that some of the outer cuticle is removed exposing some of the inner cortex cells which do not have the same dye affinity of the outer layers. Under the microscope, smashed fibres are quite ragged and provide many places where soil particles can lodge.

Q12. Why does my carpet have a grubby appearance outside the staff amenities rooms?

A12. Footwear leaving washrooms is often still damp when it hits the carpet and any disinfectants or cleaning compound residues picked up tend to deposit on the carpet. Turning to move along a walkway outside the door also wipes the soles more effectively than straight walking.

Q13. Why does my carpet soil so quickly at the entrances to our tenancy?

A13. This is very common where the incoming footwear has not travelled over a carpeted surface since leaving the outdoor environment. The offending soil is usually a mixture of dry and oily soil that sticks to the carpet surface. The soles of modern footwear often contain multiple recesses where some of the soil picked up will lodge. Hard floor surface do little to dislodge soil from the recesses where it remains until the soft surface of the carpet dislodges it.

Slowing down of incoming soil deposits is possible with effective soil barrier zones and frequent vacuum cleaning to remove soil and lift the pile.

Q14. Why does my carpet look so old and worn yet it is not due for replacement for another few years?

A14. Commercial carpets rarely reach a state where the pile “wears out” because they begin to show chair and traffic damage, pile appearance loss, and are difficult to keep clean long before that occurs. Once they look ugly enough a decision to replace them ensures that they do not “wear out” but they “ugly out”.

Unfortunately, commercial pressures or bad advice can result in the selection of a carpet that is “not up to the job”. Inferior pile fibre, too low pile weight and/or density, or numerous other factors can result in loss of good appearance much faster than is commercially acceptable. Add an inadequate cleaning regime and the “ugly-out” phenomenon is very likely to cut in.

Q15. Can you restore a carpet that has started to “ugly out”?

A15. Usually a professional pile lift vacuum and deep clean will lift the appearance of a dirty and flat carpet but the cleaner must use a technique that removes any residual chemicals from this or previous cleaning attempts. Failure to do this will promote re-soiling and more pile flattening.

Slowing the “ugly out” process requires effective soil barrier zones and frequent vacuum cleaning with an industrial machine to remove soil and lift the pile.

Planned carpet maintenance programs, carried out by specialist carpet cleaners, put great emphasis on the prevention of soil tracking onto the carpet and concentrate vacuuming efforts in the most soil prone areas. Regular deep cleaning of the more heavily used areas also prevents soil build-up and sanitises the carpet.

FTG Services can offer independent advice on suitable cleaning and restoration methods.

Q16. Why is the carpet changing colour near the windows?

A16. The most common loss of colour occurs from light fading where windows reach to floor level and direct sunlight impinges on the carpet for long periods. However, the sunlight does not need to be direct and some carpets may even fade with the artificial light in the building. High humidity during light exposure makes some carpets fade relatively quickly yet they will pass the standard industry tests for light fastness.

Q17. What may have caused my carpet to change colour?

A17. Exposure to light, both natural and artificial, is the most common cause of fading. High humidity during light exposure makes the situation worse.

Repeated use of aggressive cleaning agents may dull colours over time. Other chemical agents, e.g. bleach, can destroy carpet dyes instantly and leave the exposed parts of the carpet a totally different colour. Acne cream containing benzoyl peroxide is a common cause of mysterious white spots on domestic carpets.

Oxides of nitrogen and ozone produced in thunderstorms have been known to initiate dramatic colour changes, but the most vulnerable dyestuffs are now well known and avoided by reputable manufacturers. Badly dyed wool or nylon, where the normal dye penetration has not been achieved, may lose colour from rubbing activities such as walking traffic or bonnet cleaning.

Carpets that have a blend of coloured pile fibres with differing abrasion resistance sometimes show a slow change in colour in high traffic areas as one fibre is preferentially abraded away. For example if the wool and nylon in a blend are not the same colour, the nylon colour(s) will begin to dominate as wool fibre abrades away.