Carpet Layer Safety Meeting Kit

Carpet layers install a wide range of flooring products in homes and buildings to enhance style and comfort. The hazards involved with this work include the use of sharp and cutting tools and materials, the use of chemical adhesives and treatments, and physically demanding work that can result in numerous injuries.

FOCUS ON ERGONOMICS

Before installation, you often have to clear out furniture and haul old and new carpeting materials. Use proper lifting techniques to protect your back. Maintain a level of good overall health and fitness. Take frequent mini-breaks to rest, and rotate your tasks as much as possible.

Carpet cutting tools, sharp tack strips, sewing materials, and staples can cause injuries if you do not use hand protection and tool safety.

Use of a knee-kicker to stretch carpet wall-to-wall in a room or to engage the room-edge tack strip can cause knee injuries due to force and repetition. Workers must forcefully strike the knee kicker approximately 120-to-140 times each day. A hand and arm operated power carpet stretcher accomplishes the same tasks with reduced force. Do not trade a knee injury for a hand, arm, or shoulder injury—get training and follow ergonomic principles when using the power stretcher.

OTHER POTENTIAL HAZARDS

Carpet cutting tools, sharp tack strips, sewing materials, and staples can cause injuries if you do not use hand protection and tool safety.

Gloves should be of sufficient weight to protect you while still allowing full movement of your hand. You may need several different pairs of gloves for different work tasks. Consider

wearing eye protection to protect against flying debris and sharp objects. Always use the correct tool for the job. Ensure that your cutting tools are in good condition and sharp enough to do the job. Watch where you place your hands and knees so you do not come into contact with sharp tacks, staples, or cutting tool edges. Use caution with heat-tape and carpet irons to avoid burns.

When you use adhesives and glues to install carpet and padding, get training and read the Safety Data Sheet (SDS) for information on the handling, mixing, and personal protective equipment (PPE) required for safe use. Some carpets may require special handling due to their contents or treatments. Read the carpet health information labels for the flooring materials that you install and follow all of the directions for installation.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH DANGERS FOR CARPET LAYERS

- Compared with workers who rarely kneel, carpet layers have high frequencies of bursitis of the knee – fluid buildup requiring knee aspirations, skin infections of the knee and a variety of other knee disorders.
- Floor layers experience prolonged awkward postures and high force physical exposures in multiple body parts, which probably contribute to their high rates of musculoskeletal disorders.

MEASURES TO PREVENT/REDUCE KNEE DISORDERS

- Building contractors, carpet dealers, instructors at carpet installation schools, and trade union representatives should initiate or intensify efforts to educate carpet layers about the hazards of kneeling and using the knee kicker, and encourage carpet layers to wear knee pads and to use the power stretcher.
- Carpet layers should always wear protective knee pads while

working directly on hard floor surfaces. Such pads provide protection to the knee by distributing the weight of the body over a wider area. They reduce the chance of penetrating wounds and potential infections that can result from kneeling on sharp objects.

- Employers should provide an adequate number of power stretchers for each work crew so that no carpet layer has to depend on the knee kicker to stretch wall-to-wall carpet.
- Carpet layers should be trained to use the power stretcher proficiently in rooms of any size.
- Use of the knee kicker should be prohibited for stretching the carpet where strong kicks are required. Limit its use to engaging the carpet edges onto the tack strips or to installing carpet in very small areas such as closets, where hard kicks are not needed.

FINAL WORD

Most people align sound ergonomic principles to the white collar environment. But it is clear that the use of sound ergonomic practices/protocols and work practices are equally applicable to the demanding carpet laying trade.