Carpet Layer Safety Stats and Facts

FACTS

1. Serious knee injuries frequently result when carpet layers kneel on hard surfaces and use a knee kicker to install carpet.
2. The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) requests assistance in preventing knee injuries and disorders among carpet layers. These workers frequently report bursitis of the knee, fluid buildup requiring knee aspiration (knee taps), skin infections of the knee, and a variety of knee symptoms that are caused by frequent kneeling on hard surfaces and use of the knee kicker for stretching wall-to-wall carpet.
3. Although kneeling cannot be eliminated, carpet layers should wear protective knee pads whenever kneeling on hard surfaces. In addition, they should use the power stretcher—a safe alternative to the knee kicker that does not use the knee. Employers should ensure that each carpet layer is trained in the proficient use of the power stretcher and that a sufficient number of these devices are available to each crew of carpet installers.
4. The mass production of carpet for wall-to-wall installation has increased dramatically. As a consequence, the use of the knee kicker has become widespread among carpet layers who install wall-to-wall carpets in homes and offices. The Carpet and Rug Institute reports that 1.3 billion square yards of carpet were manufactured in the United states and most of these were used for wall-to-wall installation.
5. The past literature pertaining to floor layer injuries has primarily focused on the knee kneeling and squatting postures, common in floor laying tasks, has been associated with knee osteoarthritis, meniscal tears, and knee bursitis. With greater use of interventions and changes in work

practices and policies, WRMSD have decreased in all industries over the past 10 years.

STATS

- The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) reports that carpet layers account for six percent of all reported knee injuries, a rate 100 times the national worker average. Because you spend about 75 %t of your work time kneeling on hard sub-flooring, use kneepads to reduce the contact stress. Kneepads can also prevent accidental punctures from tack strips, flooring irregularities, and other sharps.
- 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.
- Approximately 100,000 carpet layers are employed in the United States. Carpet layers make up less than 0.06% of the U.S. workforce, but they file 6.2% of all workers' compensation claims for traumatic knee injury—a rate that is 108 times that expected in the total workforce and the highest rate of any occupation reporting such claims. This rate is also high for tile setters (53 times that expected) and floor layers (46 times that expected), both of whom perform work that requires kneeling on hard floors. Carpet layers share this risk factor, but they also use the knee kicker to stretch carpet for wall-to-wall installation.