

Under Water

Preparing Sub-Floor Slabs That Have Been Submerged for a New Flooring System.

Mother Nature holds nothing back when it comes to storms. It can sometimes take years for people to recover from hurricanes and tropical storms and the resulting flooding. Some of the most difficult installation challenges arise in the wake of natural disasters. And when water is present, these projects must be approached carefully and systematically. If not, subsequent failure is highly likely.

The general rule of thumb is: no two restoration projects are the same. Each project must be inspected and dealt with according to individual circumstances. This issue of Starlog highlights some of the considerations of installing commercial flooring on slabs that have been submerged. For any of the following steps, Starnet Members are here to help.



Types of Flooding

Before tackling the water damage, it's important to understand what you're dealing with. Flood damage produced by hurricanes or excessive rains is not the same as the damage from internal plumbing leaks. Flood waters open the door for many potential problems due to possible contaminants from sewage and landfills. They can also introduce oil, high levels of salt or microorganisms such as bacteria and fungi.

Common Best Practices

Time is of the Essence – The drying process must begin immediately to halt damage as much as possible and prevent contamination from mold and bacterial growth. Ridding the space of water through draining, pumping or vacuuming should be followed by cross ventilation to increase air movement.

Call in the Professionals – Each flood damage situation must be evaluated by a reputable, certified testing professional on a case by case basis. Professionals will inspect structural damage, perform testing to assess overall damage and recommend necessary repairs. Your local Starnet Member is the ideal resource for all aspects of the remediation process.

Evaluations may include:

- Slab core analysis
- Mold testing
- Wood subfloor testing
- Walls and framing testing
- Concrete testing for moisture vapor emission, PH and RH for dryness

These are only some of the issues that could be evaluated and additional testing may be required. This should always be left up to the discretion of the testing firm.

Remediation

Engineers, fire and flood specialty contractors, and mold experts are part of the front line. And there are many types of remediation procedures that may be required to bring the space back to habitable condition. These procedures must be performed by a licensed professional who is certified specifically for the type of remediation work being considered. Some of the procedures that might be recommended include:

Cleaning - All exposed surfaces must be scrubbed, often with a solution of Trisodium Phosphate (TSP) and water. TSP cannot be used on natural stone, painted or metal surfaces.

Moisture Control Systems for Concrete Substrate – After drying, adhesive removal and shot blasting, the floor will reveal more evidence. All abnormalities can be addressed and contaminants can be removed from the surface of the slab using this technique. This procedure may require a core sample to determine the extent of the water damage, penetration of the moisture into the substrate and or potential contaminant residue that may be present. There are many moisture mitigation systems available in the market today at many varying price points along with varied application processes. The best solution should be chosen based on the substrate's [or core sample] critical surface specifications. The warranty and specification needs of the flooring that will be installed following the remediation process should also be taken into consideration. Long term performance of the finished flooring will rely on the correct technical solution for the remediation process. Starnet Members have the expertise to help at any stage of this process.

Wood Subfloors, Joists and Structural Components – Complete removal of existing framing, wood subfloors and other structural components may be necessary. Wood structures should be allowed to dry thoroughly and floor joists and walls should be inspected for “fitness for use”. Gypsum drywall will likely need to be removed to allow for proper drying of internal areas.

Mold Remediation – Mold must be removed as it is potentially toxic. Again, due to these and other safety concerns, mold remediation should always be completed by a licensed firm. This process includes removal of mold (and dead mold) to prevent human exposure and damage to buildings and furnishings.



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Selection and Installation of New Flooring

When all proper remediation procedures have been carried out and it's time for selection and installation, your local Starnet Member can work with adjusters for comprehensive insurance quotes to ensure proper allowances. They can also help with product selection to best match the previous flooring. At the installation stage, your Starnet commercial flooring contractor will complete the installation in a professional manner and provide a warranty. Bottom line: Your local Starnet Member is here to help.

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