

## **It's 2017. Forget Everything You've Heard About Carpet Cleaning**

### **Does cleaning really help?**

Why should you clean your carpets? Aren't they just going to re-soil again very quickly? Not if the job is done properly.

Have you ever noticed how carpet seems to get dirty again very quickly after it's been cleaned? This can be very frustrating for property managers. Especially since the carpets often looked sparkling clean after they've been serviced. So what or who's to blame for this? To understand what causes this, let's look at some of the causes.

There are many potential causes of re-soiling. Track-in of ice melting products, especially calcium chloride, will hasten soiling. Water leaks leads to moist carpet, which will make the carpet a great mat to clean off the bottoms of shoes. Was something recently spilled on the carpet that someone tried to get up? Sticky residues from soft drinks will also rapidly cause re-soiling. But the number one contributor to rapid re-soiling is....carpet cleaners.

Carpet cleaning [detergent] residues are the #1 cause of re-soiling. This is because they tend to be sticky, creating a "dirt magnet" situation in your carpet. As an example, think about the tip of a soap dispenser in the kitchen. The tip will always be sticky from soap residues. If your carpet cleaning company is leaving any residues behind in your carpets, they will be left sticky and will attract dirt. And this dirt won't come out from vacuuming because the sticky residues are holding the dirt in the carpet. There's a very easy way to test for this. Simply pour a bit of warm water on a section of the carpet that gets a lot of foot traffic and agitate with a clean brush. Chances are you'll find heavy sticky soap suds in the carpet. Again, these soapy residues are attracting dirt back to your carpet, causing them to rapidly re-soil. And [unfortunately] the *vast* majority of carpet cleaners don't take the time to prevent this problem. These sticky residues are also a major contributor to the matting condition that many incorrectly believe to be wear. The sticky residues cause the fibers to stick together, and then when they are walked on the fibers stick down.

### **What to do**

How is this rapid re-soiling and matting prevented? Simple. The carpet cleaner *must* take the time to rinse the soaps out of your carpet using plain hot water. Think about your hair. How would your hair dry if you simply shampooed it but didn't take the time to rinse the shampoo out with water, but just let it air-dry? Your hair would be a sticky mess. Another example would be the laundry.

Imagine how your clothes would feel if you put them in the washing machine and added detergent, but didn't take the time to run them through the rinse cycle. How would your clothes feel? They would be sticky and stiff. This is exactly what's happening with your carpets. So why don't more carpet cleaners take the time to properly and thoroughly rinse your carpets after they're finished cleaning? Simple. That would be double the work because they would be going over the entire carpet twice. And most people don't want to pay the extra costs that would be associated with doing this. Consider this: the carpet cleaning industry is a saturated industry. In the DC/Maryland/Virginia area there are literally *thousands* of carpet cleaning companies, and they're all competing for business. And often the only way that they can get the business and win the contract is to submit the lowest bid for the project. **You get what you pay for.** As a property manager you cannot expect to get the very best quality for the absolute cheapest price. *The best quality and the cheapest price do not walk hand-in-hand.*

### **You get what you pay for**

So how much should you be paying for carpet cleaning? Again, it depends on the type of carpet that you have and the condition that it's in. If your carpet is extremely dirty and/or has a lot of sticky residues in it from previous improper cleanings, it's not reasonable to think that some miracle company is going to be able to come in and bring it back to a pristine condition and appearance for the cost of a maintenance cleaning. In such instances the carpet first needs a *restorative cleaning* which is a hot water rinsing process that utilizes a solution to dissolve (break down and liquify) the congealed sticky residues that are in the carpet. These restorative cleanings are typically priced in the range of \$.40 - \$.60 per square foot. If the carpet is in good overall shape and not too heavily soiled, a standard cleaning will likely suffice. A properly-performed standard cleaning will include the hot water rinsing process that was described earlier to remove all soap residues so that nothing is left behind that would create a sticky "dirt magnet" situation. A properly-performed standard cleaning will be in the \$.25 - \$.40 range, depending on the grade of carpet and amount of carpet to be cleaned. Remember that large jobs should qualify property managers for "bulk rate" pricing....much like purchasing in bulk quantities in Costco or Sam's Club. One thing that needs to be mentioned is that many older buildings were not designed with carpet cleaning logistics in mind. Often there are no janitorial closets or sources of water on the floors of high-rise buildings, meaning that the carpet cleaners have to make dozens of trips to the water source and carry heavy buckets to use in their machines. This, of course, needs to be factored into the cost of the job.

### **Clean the carpet before it becomes really dirty**

How often your carpet needs cleaning depends on the kind of carpet traffic you have (think kids and pets). Clean the carpet when the color starts looking dull. If

you wait until the carpet is filthy, cleaning it will be much more difficult, take much longer and cost more. After all, it's much easier to maintain a ship rather than trying to raise a ship that has already sank.

### **Try water first**

Here's an interesting fact. 80% of stains can be removed using plain tap water. This is because most stains are water-soluble. To remove a stain, press a clean, dry, white cloth over the stain to absorb the spill. Repeat until the spill is absorbed. Then gently agitate the stain with a soft brush, then blot with a soft cloth until the stain is gone. Change cloths when necessary. Use a fan to dry the area if it's very wet.

### **It seems that our carpets are beyond help**

Property managers are frequently in despair because their carpets look horrific and are beyond help from cleaning. The carpets are suffering from issues such as bleach spots that go up and down the hallways and areas of color loss and fading that are the results of harsh chemical residues. Pet stains near the elevators are a frequent problem for pet-friendly buildings. Did you know that dog urine will eventually cause color bleaching? This is because the urine goes down as an acid (uric acid) but eventually converts to an alkali which will attack carpet colors. Cleaning won't resolve these issues. Often new carpet isn't in the budget, and the building residents are complaining. So what to do? Is premature new carpet replacement the only option?

### **Consider carpet dyeing**

Carpet dyeing? Are you kidding?

Most existing carpets, including commercial carpets, can be dyed. The most noticeable casualty of a heavily used carpet is usually matting, fading, and heavy soiling from soap residues. Eventually, ALL carpets develop problems, whether the issue is ugly matted traffic patterns, food stains or pet stains, sun fading, chemical spills, or bleach spots. Repeated cleaning often does not help. Even the best carpet cleaning may not remove stubborn stains, or the stains and high traffic patterns return soon after the carpet cleaners have gone. Carpet cleaning cannot successfully address the issue of fading, chemical spills, or bleach spots. Eventually traffic patterns and matting just get worse. Many property managers think that their carpet needs to be replaced simply because it's matted down. New carpet seems to be the only solution. Only if the carpet is not structurally intact (threadbare in large areas, or torn/burnt in large areas) is buying new carpet the only alternative.

Expert carpet dyeing can be an attractive alternative to premature carpet replacement. The average carpet will last for 10 - 12 years. But carpets are

replaced 70% of the time for reasons other than wear. Those same carpets will be in good structural condition when discarded, but the appearance (color, discoloration, stains, fading, traffic areas, etc.) is unacceptable and not covered by any guarantee or warranty (as anyone knows who has ever tried to file a claim or pursue any recourse against the carpet retailer or manufacturer or a stain protectant company). Although a carpet should be cleaned properly on a regular schedule, (every 6 - 12 months depending on the carpet) improper cleaning or inadequate cleaning can actually harm the beauty and life of the carpet. Cheaper inferior carpet materials, such as polyester and olefin are not dyeable. If you are not sure what material your carpet is made from, a certified carpet dyeing technician can easily and quickly test the material to determine the fiber content.

### Why Carpet is Dyed

Some property managers are dissatisfied with outdated colors, and prefer to dye their carpet to achieve a totally new color scheme. Others are unhappy because they are tired of the color, or it is incompatible with their décor. Many property managers become frustrated with their attempts to keep their carpet clean (often a color choice which was recommended by a decorator or architect, as a "safe neutral choice", but which proves to be too light, and therefore nearly impossible to maintain). Others are convinced that their carpet appears to be worn out. Actually, most carpet does not wear out, it simply "uglies out". Carpet dyeing can make your carpet look like new by restoring, protecting and preserving the beauty, color and life of your carpet. Professional carpet dyeing, done by a reputable company, can restore an existing color, achieve a slight color change, or create an exciting new color by color restoration, tinting, color matching, true dyeing via color change, or spot dyeing. Patterned, multicolored, or sculptured carpet can also be successfully dyed.

### Carpet Dyeing Saves Money For Property Managers

Expert carpet dyeing can save property managers a great deal of money, as the cost is from 50% - 80% less than the cost of premature carpet replacement, depending on the grade and condition of the carpet. In a property that has 10,000 square feet of carpeted area, the cost of replacing the carpet with a medium grade, may cost \$60,000. Redyeing the existing carpet could cost \$15,000 or less, thus realizing a savings of \$45,000, (75% less than new carpet).

### Questions to Ask Before Selecting a Carpet Dyer

There are only a few dozen full-time carpet dyeing specialists in the USA, with only a handful who are Certified Dye Masters and Colorists. Carpet dyeing is an art and requires extensive technical training. Suffice it to say that "a savvy consumer would not take their car to a car wash to have it painted" and, likewise, carpet cleaners are not trained or equipped to offer these services.

When searching for companies who do carpet dyeing, it would be well to ask the following questions:

- Is carpet dyeing the main focus of their business?
- Do they have Certified Dye Technicians who will be performing the work?
- What kind of training and credentials does their technical staff have?
- Are the dyes guaranteed permanent and colorfast for the life of the carpet?
- Will the dyes leave any kind of residue?
- Do they have a portfolio of letters of reference and endorsements?
- Are Materials Safety Data Sheets available for inspection to prove non-toxicity of their solutions?
- Do they use liquid dyes as opposed to powder dyes? (Liquid dyes do not leave a powdery residue behind)
- Are they willing to guarantee that newly dyed carpet will have even coloration
- Are they willing to provide a written guarantee to attest to the results and the quality of their work?
- Are they able to achieve perfect color matching?

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### **An example of bleach spot repairs (spot dyeing) to repair color-damaged carpet**





An example of a recent color change by *Colorful Carpets* in a commercial property to dye a light color to a deeper color to hide stains and traffic lanes

