



Why We Do Subfloor Assessments & How It Can Affect Bids

Your new floors are only as good as the subfloor that you are installing over. Most homes require some subfloor work before we can begin installation to ensure levelness and flatness and to ensure that your subfloor is within manufacturer specifications. Most manufacturers require your subfloor to be within 3/16" of an inch over and 8' area. We always check to see if your subfloor is level before installation to ensure this. Unfortunately, we cannot determine how level your subfloor is until the existing flooring is removed. If you know if any existing subfloor issues such as: creaks, bouncing, softness or other damage, please let us know at the time of measure

Here are some of our most common subfloor issues that we encounter:

- 1. High and Low spots in concrete:** If you have an existing concrete floor, there is a good chance you will need some type of prep before we can install your new hard surface flooring. If it had carpet originally, they may not have properly prepared the concrete since carpet covers over most imperfections. Sometimes we can "spot level" certain areas, other times we need to level the entire area. Your Flooring Consultant can answer more specific questions about this and if there is a way to estimate this ahead of time.
- 2. Squeaks and Creaks:** It is common in both older and newer homes to have creaks when walking over the floors. Most of the time the creaks are caused from the subfloor coming loose from the framing. If we know about this ahead of time, we can screw down these areas to help minimize these. We are normally successful in this, but sometimes the creaks are caused by things that cannot be repaired, we will advise you if this is the case.
- 3. Uneven Plywood:** In the Pacific Northwest, homes are often built during the rainy season. This can cause swelling and warping of the subfloor that needs to be remedied before your new floor can be installed. We normally do this by sanding the seams and removing the high spots. Sometimes it is necessary to fill in low spots with a concrete compound. After removal of you flooring, the installer of field inspector will examine the floor to determine if it needs this done.
- 4. Sinking Floors:** Sinking or spongy areas are typically due to water damage or improper subfloor installation. If it is water damage, we can normally remove just the damaged area and replace it with new plywood. If it is due to the wrong type of subfloor, we can quote you on what it would cost to replace it.
- 5. Slanting or Sloping Floor:** Normally this is seen in basements or in homes with a "Post and Beam" foundation. Depending upon the type of flooring being installed, we can recommend different solutions. For basements, we normally self-level the floors to even them out. For wood subfloors, we sometimes install new plywood of various thicknesses to even it out or to fill in a low area.

To make sure your floor is sound and flat, we need to remove your existing flooring and use a level or a laser to determine flatness. Most homes need some type of work, but the range is broad. Often it is only a couple of hundred dollars, but some houses that require an entire new subfloor or a full self-level can be \$5,000 or more. Changing the subfloor can also affect the height of you floor, sometimes requiring the doors to be shaved or transition pieces to be installed. Condos that are over 20 years old, and basements of older homes, often need a full self-level. Self-leveling is the best way to ensure flatness and evenness over an existing un-level concrete floor. We can even self-level over plywood.

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What is Self Leveling?

If your home is at least 20 years old or has Gyp-Crete, there is a good chance, your home will need to be self-leveled which is the quickest and best way to produce flat surfaces for installing ceramic tile, natural stone, or engineered wood flooring.

Crumbling Gyp Crete



Cracking Concrete



We use a very effective leveling and smoothing compound that works well for producing level, flat surfaces with high absorbency for standard preparation and cost-effective applications in areas with normal wear demands. It is also a great product to use if you have a radiant floor heating system.

Pre-Self Leveling (Cracks, holes, unlevel) After Self-Leveling Poured



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There are three major types of wood subfloors usually used in houses.



- 3/4" Plywood - Common in homes 10 to 30 years old. Very durable subfloor



- 3/4" OSB - Common in newer homes, works well with most hardwood.



- Plank Subfloor - Most often seen in homes 30 years old or older. Usually requires more prep than plywood or OSB

What that means to you:

Plywood and OSB require the least amount of prep to prepare for the new flooring. Plank Subfloor, also called Shiplap, can be hit or miss. Sometimes the planks have a tongue and groove which provides extra support. Once the subfloor is exposed, we can determine if it needs any additional work.

Avoid issues with your new floors by insuring your subfloor is done right.

80% of the problems lie in 20% of the process, specifically, sub-floor and site preparation prior to installation. The 5 key causes of floor covering problems are listed above. If these problems are not addressed may leave you with issues with your floors. Be sure you say yes to having the subfloors addressed correctly from the start!