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PROPER CARE EXTENDS CARPET LIFE

The overall price of commodities has increased 326% over the past four decades, yet the price of carpets has only increased 77.8% according to The Carpet and Rug Institute, the national trade association for the carpet and rug industry, Dalton, Georgia. Carpet is a tremendous value, but it is still one of the largest purchases you will make for your home or business. How can you best protect this investment?

The durability and soil hiding characteristics of today's carpet can disguise the need for maintenance. Proper maintenance of carpet can enhance the beauty and extend the useful life of carpet and protect your investment. Clean carpet contributes not only to the overall aesthetics of a structure, but it plays a significant role in the healthful state of the indoor environment in which people work, live and spend the majority of their time.

The Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification (IICRC), the Certification body for the professional carpet and upholstery cleaning and restoration industry, Vancouver, Washington, offers the following steps for proper carpet maintenance:

- * **Controlling Soil** – Most abrasive particulate soil accumulates initially within the first few feet of major entries to homes and commercial buildings. Once inside, this soil takes its toll on carpet fibers and on the general appearance of the structure. It also contributes airborne particles that affect overall air quality. Every effort should be made to keep this soil accumulation outside by the use of properly selected entry mats. Entry mats that collect or absorb soil and moisture should be placed adjacent to carpeted areas in entries of homes and businesses and, if possible, not on top of the carpet. They must be maintained by periodic

vacuuming, shaking and cleaning.

- * **Vacuuming Carpet** Routine vacuuming with properly maintained, quality equipment is the single most important step a home or business owner/manager can take to extend the life and appearance of carpet. A top-fill upright vacuum with brush agitation or a canister vacuum with a “power head” incorporating brush agitation should be selected and used with routine frequency. Equally important, soil that is loosened and vacuumed from carpet must be collected in the vacuum’s recovery system and not allowed to re-enter the air within the structure to contribute to indoor air pollution. For this reason, a high efficiency particulate air (HEPA) filtering system or bag should be used in any vacuum equipment employed.
- * **Immediate Spotting** Most spots can be removed easily if the excess is lifted or blotted and the area is treated immediately by carpet owners with plain water or with spotters containing mild (ph range of 5-9), dilute detergents that do not leave residue. If ignored, those spots, or components thereof, may bond with fiber dye sites, forming permanent stains. Immediate spotting is an essential responsibility for home and business owners/managers.
- * **Cleaning** Installed residential carpet exposed to routine use should be programmed for cleaning at least annually. Carpet that is subjected to extreme soiling or heavy use, particularly high traffic areas, or carpet installed in homes occupied by persons with allergy or respiratory problems requires greater cleaning frequency. Carpet in low traffic areas, such as formal living rooms and dining rooms, needs less frequent cleaning. Cleaning frequency recommendations are available from The Carpet and Rug Institute or the manufacturer of your carpet. The Environmental Protection Agency has also compiled a chart published in the IICRC Standards S001-1999.

Commercial carpet should be analyzed according to its construction, the type and frequency of traffic, and the soiling conditions encountered, and other extenuating circumstances, such as occupant activities, structure design and indoor air quality. Specialized maintenance and cleaning programs (e.g. weekly, monthly, quarterly, semi-annually, etc.) should be developed based on individual needs. Moreover, frequent cleaning of entrances and high traffic areas reduces the contaminants and soil particulates tracked in from outside the structure that accumulate in these areas.

One of the most critical, though often neglected, responsibilities of carpet owners involves routine maintenance. The useful life and appearance of carpet are affected substantially by the type, quality and frequency of maintenance procedures. Carpet that is properly cared for will provide many years of beauty and service. Following the IICRC recommended four steps of carpet maintenance will protect your carpet investment.