

# Installation:

## Residential Carpet Seaming Success by the Numbers

By Danny Owens, Fishman Flooring Solutions

**S**ixteen per cent of U.S. adults are planning a new or existing home purchase in the next 12 months, according to a recent report by the National Association of Home Builders. In addition, spending on home improvements is at an all-time high. This is good news for carpet installers, because home sales and home improvements typically involve new or replacement carpet. These trends are well underway, as evidenced by an increase of seam tape sales of approximately 20 per cent since the beginning of 2021.

### Tips for Successful Carpet Seaming Outcomes

Here are some rules of thumb that generally apply to most seaming installations.

Always:

- Test a small piece of the carpet before starting the job to determine the appropriate heat setting.
- Read the technical information for the carpet backing to ensure that the seaming installation complies with the manufacturer's recommendations.
- Make sure that the cut is kept between the rows and the nap of the carpet.
- Seal the edge of the carpet using the manufacturer's recommended seam sealer. Using the recommended sealer is critically important in determining liability if an unraveling problem occurs.
- Place something heavy, such as a toolbox, on the seam for a minute or so to put pressure on the adhesive to ensure it gets into the carpet backing.
- Roll the seam with a hand roller or carpet box tractor to ensure that it is obscured from view.

This uptick in residential carpet installations puts a premium on installers understanding carpet seaming basics. Knowing the basics can make the difference between an exceptional installation, where the seams are both invisible and durable, and a failed installation, with unsightly seam peaking or seam separation.

When carpet seams fail, the impact can be significant. First, residential carpet installation failures are costly to address for both homeowners and flooring installers. Second, failed seams often stain the reputations of the installers involved and the flooring installation industry in general.

The best way for flooring installation contractors to ensure that the seams in the carpets they install will create the best possible outcomes for homeowners is to stick to these five basic principles for carpet seaming success. They are:

#### 1. Select the Right Seam Tape for the Job

There is no one size fits all when it comes to seam tapes. There are seam tapes made specifically for residential uses and others that are made solely for commercial spaces. For residential installations, where stretch puts tension on the carpet, a seam tape that will hold up to the extreme tension of stretching the carpet a full 1 percent to 1.5 percent should be used.

#### 2. Follow the Manufacturer's Instructions

An important rule of thumb when seaming carpet is often overlooked. Installers should always read the manufacturers' instructions for both the carpet being seamed and the seam tape being used. There are, for example, markedly different approaches for seaming carpets made of nylon, polyester and wool, to say nothing of soft-backed carpets and water-resistant carpets.

#### 3. Understand Carpet Seaming Fundamentals

Flooring installation contractors who excel at carpet seaming for the housing market understand three fundamentals relating to their craft. First, they recognize the direct correlation between the quality





of the seam and the cleanliness of the seaming iron. A clean iron allows the adhesive to move freely through the grooves in the bottom of the iron. This results in a well-bonded seam. Also, a clean iron won't smoke up the room.

Second, they realize the importance of setting the seaming iron at the right temperature. This is critical because different carpets require different settings. Ideally, the seaming iron temperature should be set as low as possible to avoid overheating, which can affect the hot melt, the carpet backing and the twist of the face yarns.

Third, experienced installers understand that haste makes waste when seaming carpet, despite pressure from anxious home buyers and homeowners wanting to accelerate the carpet installation process. Among the many problems that can occur when installing seams too quickly is that the adhesive will not fully transfer to the back of the carpet.

#### 4. Take Advantage of Training Opportunities

Developing proficiency in carpet seaming takes time and training given the number of different carpets, backings and seam tapes that are currently sold, as

well as the stream of new products being introduced into the marketplace. Many of the most skilled flooring installation contractors have been certified by Certified Flooring Installers (CFI), which offers day-long carpet seaming workshops. Participants in these workshops receive hands-on training in the best carpet seaming practices.

Other installers turn to their local flooring and flooring supplies distributors for training. Seam tape vendors periodically conduct counter days to demonstrate seaming techniques and answer any questions installers may have.

#### 5. Turn to the Experts When in Doubt

Importantly, the best residential carpet installers know how to get the answers efficiently and effectively to their questions, saving both time and money. They typically turn to the websites of seam tape manufacturers for answers to their questions.

Leading distributors of flooring and flooring installation products are another excellent source of information on all aspects of flooring and flooring installation. Branch personnel are trained in the proper use of seam tapes and seaming tools and many distributors offer a toll-free number on the company website that can be used to get answers to questions about any aspect of flooring installations and installation products. **PROINSTALLER**

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