

Well, we can at least agree on a few things,

this category of product is over sold resulting in unrealistic expectations as a product category by most retailers and end-users, and is installed incorrectly on a regular basis.

As to me recommending or telling anyone that this product category is the next best thing since laminate, if you care to read through several posts I've made here you'll pretty much quickly see I don't like floating floors. But I never said that I did. I did say that I wouldn't hesitate to use a resilient product myself or recommend one. That's because I know where these floors should and should not be used and what they will and won't do. But I digress, because floating floors are not used in my world (commercial) much or at least really shouldn't be.

That being said:

- They won't fix subfloor problems.
- They won't turn your floor into a swimming pool and stop water from getting to the substrate.
- They don't fix a slab moisture issue.
- They are not suitable for every application. (This gets missed a lot because people want to cheap out on demo in order to do a glued product.)
- There are maximum limits to how much of this material you can run both in total square footage as well as in the length or width of the run. This varies by manufacturer.

If we could stop the misinformation on those 5 points alone, 80% of the problems will go away. These are things that need to be explained to the consumer at the point of sale. Not after the fact.

The remaining problems would primarily be installation related and manufacturing claims.

It's also no different than anything else in life, you get what you pay for. If you buy low end, builder-grade crap that's what you are getting...crap. If you buy a mid-grade to premium product they perform as well as any other type of resilient flooring in the marketplace.

I also agree that there is an absolute glut of companies just like the one in question here, who should not be in the industry in my opinion. To me they are falsely representing what they are. These guys don't have a production facility. They are pretty much an importer exporter who tries to make it appear as though they are a domestic manufacturer of flooring. They don't do it overtly, but they simply don't say that they don't make the product. A sin of omission is still a sin, right? 😊

That's why some of these things you are mentioning are creating so many problems. You have all of these under-supported products, with little to no technical expertise at the manufacturing level and viola, you get a bunch of claims. It's all about price with this level of company. That's only gotten worse in the past 12 - 14 months. As I pointed out, this particular company has their CARBII compliance logo on all of their LVT brochures. CARBII has nothing really to do with LVT. It has to do with composite wood products, MDF, and fiberboard. Which goes to show

either their marketing person needs a review, or the people don't even understand what they are selling. A ton of these guys were constantly running into product availability issues due to the constant shutdowns in China and Vietnam where the bulk of these products are made. So, to try and get ahead of the curve and have product, they placed massive orders. Now the product is all here in the US and the economy is tanking so they are all panicking and dumping it at ridiculously low prices. In many cases they are even taking a loss to get it out of their inventory and take a tax deduction on the loss. Again, this is all contributing to a bunch of bad products being in the market and it's only going to get worse in the short term. The only upside is, hopefully it will take enough of these fly-by-night companies out of business to clear up the problems.

These floors are no different than any other resilient floor sold today. If you put a reasonably decent product, in the correct application, and you install it correctly then you shouldn't have a problem unless there is a manufacturing defect, and the manufacturer should stand behind their product and not run when there is a problem. Too many of these guys selling LVT, SPC, or WPC are so underfunded that they will literally make you take them to court rather than pay a claim.

As to the landfill issue, whose fault is that? The product is recyclable. If the product is removed through normal attrition, change of decor, or due to a claim then why is it being sent to a landfill? That's not the manufacturer's fault. That's a consumer or contractor's fault for not directing their waste to the right place. I could say the same thing about anything made from recyclable plastic. If it's not disposed of as a recyclable material, then that's just stupid. I know commercially that for large scale renovation projects that material is often separated and disposed of accordingly from other types of material so that it can be recycled because they've found ways or built the cost of r. And that's here in Indiana where it's still cheap to just send things to a landfill. What it really comes down to is that most people won't deal with it properly unless it's cost neutral, or they are financially incentivized to dispose of it properly. Pretty much any LVT, SPC, or WPC can be recycled right back into backing material for more LVT, SPC, or WPC, so why would you landfill it? There are several manufacturers who have programs in place to take the materials back for this very reason. Funny thing is the biggest problem they have is that they can't get enough material consistently so there is still a lot of "virgin" product being generated. Don't get me wrong, there are limits to how much recycled content you can use before it effects dimensional stability, but they can't even get close to that amount.

Since ASTM 710 and ASTM F-1482 both reference the 3/16" in 10' span, and that standard is used as the primary "industry standard" that pretty much every resilient manufacturer in the industry bases their installation instructions upon, I'm not aware of any companies who don't directly reference that standard or state in their installation instructions that the floor needs to be in a tighter tolerance than standard. I think any manufacturer who requires something tighter would be at a huge disadvantage in the marketplace to everyone else in compliance to that standard. Can you share what manufacturers you've come across that with? If they are requiring something stricter, are they using that type of standard (so much in such and such a span) or are they using an FF standard like E1155? I look at flooring installation documents for all kinds of manufacturers regularly and I check back on them each time something comes up that I'm

involved with, and I just haven't seen that so if it's out there I'd like to be aware of it so that I know.

While I know it's in vogue regarding the "Waterproof" claim on not only LVP but even laminates today, I have to admit that I've never understood the consumer's attraction to this claim. If you have a major water leak in your that's bad enough to damage the floor, then why in the world is your flooring warranty involved? That's something that you're going to turn into your homeowner's insurance in most cases. It's not just going to damage the floor, it's going to likely damage the subfloor, it's going to likely damage base boards, it's going to possibly get into drywall, if it's crazy even electrical. Why the heck do I need a flooring warranty to cover that? I'm going to have to remove the floor to fix that other stuff anyway and my flooring warranty isn't going to cover that. The bulk of those claims are about marketing. Nothing more. So, to me I don't encourage or in many cases even bring it up to someone asking my opinion about waterproofing the flooring. There's also a lot of different variations on what the definition of waterproof is from manufacturer to manufacturer. My own understanding is that waterproof means that the flooring, when exposed to moisture from above, which would be what most people are concerned about (tracking in slush and snow, spills, sink overflows, icemaker overflows, etc.) the flooring will not be damaged or allow the water to penetrate to the subfloor between the joints if the water is removed within 72 hours. However, I will say that to me, it's still a bit of a moot point because unless you've used a sealant around the entire expansion space that needs to be there, then you have an avenue for water to get to the substrate that the flooring simply cannot prevent. Best case scenario, and what I always recommend is to use a 6mil poly, overlapped 6" at the seams, and sealed with 2" packing tape to at least try and give the subfloor some protection. Not bulletproof but then again, I don't like floating floors and I wouldn't buy anything because it was waterproof other than a raincoat.

I think eventually what we will probably see, after enough lawsuits happen, is some type of ASTM standard to level the playing field on these claims of being waterproof. Don't get me wrong, it's not going away anytime soon but I think the hype will eventually die down.

Regarding expansion and movement what most people, including less experienced installers, fail to realize is that while the product is pretty dimensionally stable (I'm referring here primarily to SPC) and doesn't really do much expansion and contraction itself, every structure (house, building, etc.) expands and contracts throughout the annual weather cycle. This is a large part of why expansion joints are still necessary with any floating floor. As an inspector I'm sure you know that concrete for example can and will expand up 1" in a 20' span depending on the climate, and Rh of the space. If concrete can move 1" in a 20' span, how much do you think a wood subfloor moves in a 20' span? Probably more. As things settle and adjust in that structure, and weather varies in extreme years, that expansion space is critical to allow that floor to float because without any adhesive, if it gets bound anywhere by any vertical surface, it eventually shows up as a failure in the floor because that's the path of least resistance. (science 😊)

Locking systems are a function of price. You've primarily got two key players licensing locking mechanisms and every time a manufacturer comes out with their own proprietary system one of the two or both sue that manufacturer for patent infringement. Valinge and I4F each have multiple generations of locking mechanisms. I think the latest is 5th generation. But the newer

the locking mechanism the higher the licensing fees for it. So, a ton of the lower end products use the older generation locking mechanisms because, surprise, surprise, neither Valinge nor I4F discontinue an older generation they just charge MORE for the newer ones. Meaning the manufacturers who want to play on price are essentially incentivized to use the older locks which have a higher failure rate. They also thin down the overall thickness of the product which also thins the locking mechanism. Thus, you are seeing more and more failures as the economy worsens and more and more people cannot afford to move up to a better product. Although with freight stabilizing and major manufacturing (Shaw, Mohawk, Mannington) all rolling back costs in the past 3 months this could help to decrease claims at least for now. Depends on if the retailers pocket the decrease or pass it on. I think eventually they will have to but for now it's yet to be seen.

I'd at least like to acknowledge that all of these points are good points, but none of them have anything to do with the OP's original question. None of them were part of my original post because they weren't relevant to answering their questions. The study you posted doesn't apply to the OP's question, nor does it answer any of the health concerns they have because it simply doesn't pertain to the product they have installed. The issue I had was that in addition to not adding any resolution to the OP, you somewhat called me out as though I were providing bad information. When in fact the study you posted is not relevant and provides misleading and dated information. Yes, science is still science but, if the science isn't related to the question, then why post it? It's just throwing confusion into something that is already confusing enough for the person asking the question.

My point for calling out the date is that pretty much the entire study is based on flooring from 15 to 20 years ago. Back then LVT was still relatively in its infancy. SPC and WPC didn't even exist and most LVT was either glued directly or very early on there were a few products with overlapping edges that adhered together (what a nightmare that turned into right?) Heck, laminates had really only been big about 5 years here in the US at that time. A lot of product testing, changes in manufacturing, changes in material, standards, and corporate transparency have occurred in that 15–20-year period. Is it perfect? Hell no. Is it a lot better than it was? I believe it's a magnitude above where we were 20 years ago. So, at best there have been significant enough changes to the vast majority of the products in the market that the test results would be quite different if the experiments were done today even if using the same science. It's also based upon a fairly small data sample and doesn't account for things like manufacturing differences that were in place back even then.

The world can also look pretty dark and dim when all you're seeing are the failures and not the successes. The reality is that most major manufacturers have well below a 2% defect rate. A 2% in any industry is considered world class level manufacturing, whether it's a car, a computer, a hostess cupcake, or a floor. I see a lot of claims myself, but I also get to see the other part, more than 98%, of the flooring that I'm involved with be successful and work as advertised. I have an uncle who was a police officer for over 20 years. When he was younger, he was one of the nicest people you ever wanted to meet, but after several years, the job took its toll and he started to assume everyone, even family, was always the worst humanity had to offer. He always had his guard up and after many years, I finally had to purposefully stop hanging out with him because it also began to affect me. Seeing what it looks like you do for a living I can see why

you may hold the opinions that you do, but as someone who has spent similar time in the industry at multiple levels from my knees to my desk, please know that the sky is not falling. Yes, there are bad products in the marketplace, eventually it will stabilize and the better products in this category will win out. Until then all we can do is ride it out and fix what we can control. I think the correction is coming very quickly as the economy goes bad the rats will run. Retailers will have to learn to sell again and learn how to find business instead of just having it walk through the door. With the crazy turnover of retail salespeople, it's a never-ending battle to even make them competent let alone a "jedi master" on what to believe and what to know is "marketing hype". It's even harder when it's just a job to them and not something they have any desire to try and learn.

Last, I want you to know I've spent enough time on this ridiculous topic today to make my cat mad at me because I forgot to give him his afternoon treats. So, while I may forget this whole thing and move on (especially if I take another hydrocodone before I go to bed 😊) my cat may still harbor some regrets. I don't want to continue down a negative path here. I've said my piece and you are welcome to your stance and opinions. I think I see that we probably have more in common than not. All I'd ask is that we are considerate of each other as professionals and act as such. From here on I consider us friends and I look forward to learning from you moving forward. Hopefully, I've shared some things that you may take away and into your toolbox as well. We're obviously both passionate about what we do and so it's easy to let emotions override our senses and just be mean. With that said thank you for being professional in your response and I apologize for being a bit direct and "pokey" in my initial response. Again, I've been home for 2 weeks on heavy pain meds and muscle relaxers so I'm not my normal self. Most people (except for @DarisMulkin) find me a delight so I hope I can rectify any sour feelings you may still have. I think both our intent was to ultimately help the OP.

CFR

Note: I'd like to apologize for derailing the thread. I probably should have turned this into a PM, but I felt that the OP, if they returned, should see the response. Sorry to the admins if I've caused any issue.