

Breathing New Life into Your Carpets: An Introduction to Residential Dyeing Techniques

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While the technique known as carpet dyeing has been around almost as long as carpet as been in existence, on-location carpet dyeing is a more recent practice, that has only been around for the last couple of decades.

Most residential carpeting is first dyed at the carpet mill prior to delivery and installation at the residence. Up until recently, when traditional carpet cleaning did not adequately remove stains and other blemishes, the only solution for the property owner or resident was to either live with the unsightly faded or stained carpeting, or replace it. However, depending on the economic situation faced by the property owner or resident, in some cases replacing the carpeting is not a viable option.

Apartment and rental owners are generally more price sensitive when it comes to carpet replacement. However, low vacancy rates, skyrocketing rents, and abnormal increases in equity during the early to mid-2000s, made carpet replacement between tenants a cost-effective option, as it was easy to recoup the costs of this investment. In fact, many inexperienced and new multi-unit property owners were installing new carpeting, even in cases where there was just a small, yet unsightly bleach spot or stain in the middle of a room. Even large conglomerate property management companies put new floor covering policies in place, due to the pressure generated by high rental rates. For example, when a resident is paying \$2,000 to \$3,000 for a two-bedroom unit, it is hard for the property manager not to justify new carpeting.

Today, however, with foreclosures on the rise and property values dropping, whether renting or selling, these same property owners are now looking for alternatives to new carpeting, in order to reduce costs while improving their return on investment. What makes this decision increasingly complex is the useable life of the carpet, as well as the possibility of the previous tenant or owner covering all or part of new carpet costs. As such, carpet dyeing has become an increasingly viable alternative to carpet replacement.

For example, a typical bleach spot in the middle of a room can be neutralized and dyed back to the original surrounding color for a small fraction of the replacement costs. What most people don't understand is that carpet dyeing is not like painting. Instead, the technician uses the spot color as the base and mixes the appropriate colors to match the original carpet color. Many daily household activities can cause these stains and blemishes. For example, if a chlorine-based solution, like bleach, is applied to carpet, even if it is wiped up immediately, it will still cause a light stain to appear within a couple of days. Pet stains can also degrade the color of carpeting and cause light spots to appear throughout a room. Each of these situations can be aptly dealt with through spot treatments.

In more extreme cases where there are multiple discolored and colored spots through out the unit, a complete carpet re-dyeing may be the best option. In this case the carpet is prepped for the extreme color variation spots and the carpet is then dyed a shade or two darker, than the original color. This method completely covers the stains or blemishes, for less than a quarter of the replacement cost of new carpeting, and can be completed in less than a day, giving the property owner the ability to extend the life of the carpeting for at least one more tenant in that unit.

Generally, on-location dye work in occupied residential property is limited to spot or faded areas due to the inconvenience it causes for the tenant, in particular the need to relocate furnishings during the process.

When choosing a carpet dyeing company, property owners and residents should choose a dye technician with the same care as they would any other service technician. If they are having carpet spots treated, have the technician treat a sample spot to insure that the end result meets your expectations. And remember, the carpet color is being repaired, not replaced.



About the Author

John Langenwalter is Vice President of Langenwalter Industries inc. He has more than 25 years of experience in the carpet dyeing industry, and earned a Bachelor of Science in Chemistry from California State University, Fullerton and a Masters of Business Administration from Chapman University in Orange, Calif. John can be reached at john@langenwalter.com.