



Technical Information #8

ADHESIVE SPREAD RATES AND THEIR IMPORTANCE

Manufacturers typically give a spread rate for their wood floor adhesives.

Why? Because cost-per-square foot is the only way to accurately compare the cost of adhesives to one another.

For example, take a five gallon pail that costs \$100 and gets 50 square feet per gallon when spread. A similar adhesive in a three gallon pail may cost the same \$100 but get 85 square feet per gallon spread rate. One would think the five gallon pail would be cheaper since you get five gallons for the same price. But when you do the math, the result is that both products are within a cent of each other in square foot cost (divide the pail cost by the number of gallons in the pail, then divide that number by the square feet per gallon to get the cost per square foot).

So how accurate is the manufacturer's advertised coverage?

It's only as accurate as the trowel you use and the job you are doing that day.

Why? Trowels are really measuring devices that allow only a certain amount of glue to pass through the notches. Just as important, the sub floor condition, as well as the Installer's technique, greatly impacts the amount of glue spread. For example, a rough, pitted, porous sub floor will accept more adhesive than a smooth sub floor any day. And an Installer who presses hard on the trowel will leave less adhesive on the floor than one who spreads lightly or with the trowel at a low (< 45 degrees) angle.

How can you know what your spread rate will be?

Experience and conditions are the best answer. Keep track of how much the adhesive spread on previous jobs and know the conditions (smooth, rough, pitted, etc.). Consistently use the trowel size recommended by the manufacturer. Then use the manufacturer's spread rate and your own experience as a guide to estimate your actual glue needs for the next job.

Why do manufacturers even bother to suggest a spread rate?

Careful testing is done by quality manufacturers to determine how much adhesive is the right amount to hold the wood floor in place through its lifetime and seasonal changes. Part of that formula includes the correct size trowel required to achieve that spread rate. Conditions are 'standard', laboratory simulations, so they can never cover every job site. But they are critical for telling you how much glue is enough to do the job and thus prevent you from buying more glue than is needed. So you'll save on glue costs when you use the correct size trowel to apply just the right amount of glue to do the job.