

Flattening Out the Price of Carpet Tiles

Office carpet tiles, like any commercial purchase, will always be a balance between price and quality. But that's not an easy equation when terms like "Heavy Contract" can obscure what's actually going into the tile. In this article we'll try to clarify the key features that define a carpet tile's performance in an office environment.

Nylon Versus Polypropylene

The most important contributor to a tile's performance is its base material. Nylon compounds such as Aquafil consistently outperform poly in the standard tests usually applied to commercial carpet tiles. (For more information on these tests, see the white paper on <http://www.buroffloor.com/symbols-article-32>). Nylon's pile resists flattening, and so retains its appearance for longer than polypropylene.

Simon Lawrence of Büroffloor clarifies the position: "The overall wear resistance of a good quality polypropylene tile is pretty much on a par with nylon, but nylon retains its pile depth far better. As a result we tend to recommend a nylon product such as Aquafil because it looks better for longer.

"But sometimes appearance has to take second place to cost, and this is where a good poly tile scores. The pile will flatten somewhat after a few months, but once that's happened there's nothing wrong with the overall life."

A Question of Aesthetics

So the choice of material for a carpet tile comes down more to appearance than to outright performance. But while a polypropylene tile may not wear out, its appearance will inevitably deteriorate after a few months as the pile flattens.

"Buyers need to make a value call," says Lawrence, "If durability is more important than appearance then there's a lot to be said for taking the cheaper option. We've recently added a polypropylene product to our range to cater for this market. Arizona passes all the tests to qualify as a heavy contract tile, so as long as buyers understand that it will flatten more quickly than a nylon product there's no reason why it shouldn't work in an office environment."

The Expert's View

So which is the right choice; nylon or polypropylene?

Simon Lawrence's view is that the price advantage of the poly product isn't enough to sway the balance. "From a strictly utilitarian viewpoint, polypropylene carpet tiles will do the job, otherwise we wouldn't offer the option. But the basic reason for laying carpet tiles is to make an area look good, and nylon keeps its appearance far better than poly.

“If cost is everything, then by all means go for Arizona; it’s a good, contract quality carpet tile that will wear well, but paying a little more for one of the nylon tiles will keep the office looking good long after you’ve forgotten the price.”