



Removing Vinyl Flooring

Q. *What's the best way to remove old vinyl flooring and its adhesive?*

A. *Clayton DeKorne responds:* Most old vinyl floor coverings contain asbestos, so cutting, grinding, sanding, and dryscraping the old floor is not a good idea. Asbestos wasn't completely banned from resilient floor coverings until 1986. Tile adhesives predating 1986 also contain asbestos. However, the adhesives used to secure sheet goods are less of a problem, as they never contained asbestos and are usually applied only along the perimeter and at seams.

If you have to strip away the old flooring, don't let the word asbestos scare you. The flooring and adhesive can be removed safely without bringing in an asbestos abatement contractor. The Resilient Floor Covering Institute publishes very clear guidelines, in booklet and video form, for removing old resilient flooring ("Recommended Work Practices for the Removal of Resilient Floor Coverings" is available free from RFCI, 966 Hungerford Dr., Suite 12B, Rockville, MD 20850).

The guidelines vary, depending on whether you are stripping tiles or sheet goods. In general, the RFCI recommends using a heat gun to soften the adhesive so you can peel up the flooring. The remaining adhesive is then wet down, using a small garden sprayer, and scraped off with a razor scraper. An alternative to the heat gun is a floor-stripping machine that uses infra-red heat to soften the adhesive. These machines are made by UAS Automation Systems (4524 Parkway Commerce Blvd., Orlando, FL 32808; 407/294-8551). Three models are available, sized to heat one, two, or four 12x12 tiles during a 30-second "cycle." Typically, one worker pulls the machine along, while another scrapes the tile loose. Because the infra-red penetrates the tile and softens the adhesive, the tiles can be lifted off in one piece and most of the adhesive can be scraped

up easily. These machines are expensive (ranging in price from about \$7,000 to \$24,000), but you can often rent one. If you call UAS, they may also be able to point you to a flooring contractor in your local area that you can sub the job out to.

Yet another method using dry ice has been recommended by Ken Smith of Smitty's Flooring Specialties in Randolph, Vt. Smith often uses about a 2-foot-round pile of dry ice pellets, which he sweeps around the room. According to Smith, the dry ice causes the tiles to literally pop off the floor.

After the tiles have been removed, you may still have to get rid of some residual adhesive before new mastic or sticky-back tiles will bond to the floor. The RFCI recommends using a liquid adhesive remover, applied with a hand sprayer. While keeping the area wet, you use a rotary floor machine with a 3M black floor pad. The slurry is then vacuumed up with a HEPA vac (another rental item). Make sure you rinse the floor thoroughly, or the remaining residue will interfere with the new adhesive bond.

Clayton DeKorne is senior editor of the Journal of Light Construction and editor of Tools of the Trade.

In a Fog

Q. *My glasses always steam up when I wear a dust mask. What can I do to avoid this?*

A. *Bill Kennedy responds:* There are a couple of things that can be done with both the mask and the glasses to prevent fogging.

The most important thing to check is the fit of the mask. Most dust/mist masks simply curve over the nose, and have a metal clip or a piece of foam to seal off the spaces near the nose. There's usually a gap left, so when you exhale, air escapes through these gaps

right under your glasses, causing them to fog up. You can bet that if air is escaping, it's also entering the mask, which, of course, defeats its purpose. One company, Moldex (Moldex Metric, 4671 Leahy St., Culver City, CA 90230; 213/870-9121) makes masks that are shaped to fit a face. These come in two sizes, regular and small, and have two elastic straps that hold the mask tight to the face.

If you still get fogging, you might try a mask with an exhaust valve. The valve, located directly in front of your mouth, reduces most of the pressure inside the mask caused by each breath, so very little air will escape below your glasses. However, this won't always reduce all the pressure, so you might still get some fogging.

You may have to use a half-face respirator with a rubber (usually a soft silicon rubber) face piece. If you spend some time to carefully adjust the cross straps, you can get a good, tight seal to the skin (unless you have a beard). If you still get fogging, you haven't fit the mask properly.

You can also try using an anti-fog solution on your glasses. Most anti-fog coatings work by absorbing water. Once applied, the lenses are saturated with a thin, uniform film of water, so the added moisture from your breath won't condense and adhere to the lenses. One example is Encon Fog-Fixer (Encon Safety Products, P.O. Box 3826, Houston, TX 77253; 713/466-1449), which come as towelettes. You wipe the lenses with the towelette, then buff with a tissue. This will prevent fogging for days. Or you can get nonprescription safety glasses with a permanent anti-fog coating from AOSafety (Cabot Safety Products, 5457 W. 79th St., Indianapolis, IN 46268; 800/225-9038) and Uvex Safety (10 Thurber Blvd., Smithfield, RI 02917; 800/343-3411).

Bill Kennedy owns Kenco Safety Products (P.O. Box 419, West Hurley, NY 12491; 800/872-2964), which distributes a full line of safety products.

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