



## *Poly Balls*

"Poly Balls" occasionally occur in new maple installations or during resurfacing or recoating of existing maple floors coated with oil-based floor finish. The finish collects between flooring strips and cures at a much slower rate. With some new low-VOC oil-modified finishes the cure time has increased. Solvent-based finishes rely on exposure to oxygen to cure the film. A situation may occur when the finish is applied penetrates between the flooring strips.

Once the finish gets in between the flooring strips, it becomes more difficult for oxygen to react with the dryers in the finish. This allows the finish to remain partially cured for an indefinite period of time. When the moisture content of the flooring increases and closes the spacing between the boards, the finish that has not fully cured squeezes out from the side joints of the maple strips and appearing like little BB's on the surface of the flooring. When stepped on, poly balls flatten out or break open and leaving unsightly residue on the finish.

The floor should be swept daily to remove any poly balls that have broken free. A complete resurfacing is not necessary to remedy this minor problem. Contact your MFMA Installer or Finish Manufacturer for an evaluation for recommended remedial procedures. Extent and severity of poly balls varies dramatically, so a general recommendation is not possible.

The Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association (MFMA) recommends maintaining indoor relative humidities between 35 percent and 50 percent, and air temperatures between 55 degrees and 75 degrees year-round.

By limiting wide swings in atmospheric conditions inside the facility, you will reduce the expansion and contraction of the flooring system. If flooring materials are properly acclimated, a 15 percent fluctuation in indoor relative humidity will not adversely affect the maple. Excessive shrinkage and/or expansion may occur with indoor relative humidity variations in excess of 15 percent.

It is especially important to maintain this recommendation during the application of oil-based floor finishing products. When conditions fall outside the recommended limits, finish oozing is a likely possibility, even if the floor was refinished several months before.

In buildings where air conditioning is not available, many facility managers make use of circulating or venting fans. Other facilities have vent windows or corridor doors available to open as needed to improve air circulation. Facilities without adequate HVAC equipment to regulate the indoor atmosphere, or those facilities which are "closed up" with no ventilation for long periods of time (summer breaks) are more likely to develop flooring problems directly related to environment.

If you have any additional questions, please contact MFMA's Technical Director at 888/480-9138.

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