Refinishing

Maple flooring is a hygroscopic material that expands and contracts due to the influences of moisture, temperature and humidity changes. The multiple application of sealers, finishes and paints on the surface of an installed maple floor can only slow down the rate of vapor transfer between the maple flooring and its environment. Such applications cannot stop the dimensional changes inherent in this natural product.

When a new maple floor is installed, sanded, sealed, painted and finished during the summer months, the maple's moisture content is usually at its highest annual level in most regions of the United States. In most locations, the onset of winter months results in lower relative humidities and ambient air temperatures. Such environmental changes can cause individual flooring strips to contract. The same can be said for existing maple floors that have undergone a complete resurfacing during the summer months. The removal of the existing floor finish, which typically consists of multiple coats, increases the vapor transmission rate and can cause the originally installed maple flooring to expand or contract at a faster rate than it did during prior years when multiple finish layers reduced vapor transmission rates and resulting flooring movement.

Such changes in the appearance of a newly refinished maple flooring system are not uncommon, and are a direct result of the recently exposed surface maple adjusting to a new environmental set point. As with newly installed floors, these resurfaced floors typically reach an equilibrium set point within their installed environments after 6-12 months. Future expansion and contraction cycles tend to be less pronounced.

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

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