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Carpet Tiles Become More Sustainable

A new, more sustainable adhesive has been developed for use on carpet tiles that, according to initial reports, is as effective as conventional adhesives and holds up well when cleaned with professional carpet extraction methods.

Adhesives are typically used to bind the layers of carpet tiles together. However, some adhesives in use today make the carpet tiles difficult to recycle. Because of this, it is estimated that in Europe more than 154 million pounds of carpet tiles end up in landfills each year.

Although the data were not broken down by type, the nonprofit Carpet America Recovery Effort estimates that more than 5 billion pounds of carpet are sent to U.S. landfills each year. The new adhesive, which was recently announced and developed by the University of York, city of York, England, and published in the journal *Green Chemistry*, could dramatically reduce the environmental impact of carpet tiles since it would allow them to be recycled.

According to York professor James Clark, director of the school's Green Chemistry Center for Excellence, "Carpet tiles are becoming increasingly popular, so it is important that we find ways to produce them in a more sustainable manner."

In the United States, carpet tiles, sometimes called interlocking carpet tiles, are also growing in popularity in settings such as airports, convention centers, hospitals, and other high-traffic venues. Facility managers and custodial workers find them to be very durable and relatively easy to clean as well as to remove should they be damaged or excessively soiled.

"This is just another example of how our industry and related industries are

becoming more sustainable and environmentally responsible,” says Steve Ashkin, president of The Ashkin Group and CEO of Sustainable Dashboard Tools, LLC. “If [they are as] effective as reported, it demonstrates how sustainability and environmental considerations can be incorporated into new products without sacrificing [their] quality or maintenance.”

Ashkin adds that many U.S. carpet manufacturers are also now taking greater responsibility for their products in how they are made and once their useful life is over.

Says Ashkin, “They are developing new methods to manufacture carpet and have developed ‘take-back’ and recycling programs specifically for carpet tiles and other kinds of carpet, which all help protect the environment and promote sustainability.”