



## **PRE-INSTALLATION LETTER**

### **TRUTH & REALITY: BE PREPARED**

Wood floors are a lifetime investment, adding value and beauty to your home or office. As with any major improvement you should expect some disruption and inconvenience. When having wood floors refinished or installed make sure to give the floor contractor the time he needs to complete the job without interference from other trades. Other trades are allowed the necessary time to complete their jobs, thus so should the wood floor contractor. Several factors you should be aware of:

### **PRE-INSTALLATION REQUIREMENTS:**

The building should be completely closed in, with outside windows & doors in place. ALL wet trades(drywall, paint, ceramic tile, etc.) should have completed there work. Air conditioning, heating and ventilation systems should be operating. The temperature and relative humidity be at "normal living conditions"- that is between 15 & 30 degrees(C) and between 30-60 percent humidity- for a LEAST 6 days prior to the wood flooring being delivered. Moisture testing should be the responsibility of the wood floor installer. Furniture, appliances, room furnishing, and old floor coverings should be removed from rooms where flooring is being installed. In South Africa it is sometimes difficult to acclimatize the wood to the room or home as unlike in some other countries where inside the houses there is a controlled environment created with means of thermostatic air conditioners and humidifiers. (in other words come summer or winter, rain or sunshine the room temperature and air moisture is constant) In South Africa we have situations through all 4 seasons where there is no controlled environment in the house, so often the best we can do is to ensure that the wood is properly seasoned and dried. If flooring that has been dried to coastal moistures is being installed inland then one should acclimatize the flooring until moistures are acceptable for inland use, this is also visa versa if flooring is dried for inland use and is being installed at coastal areas then the flooring should also be acclimatized to coastal conditions. If one is using Elastilon as an installation system the inland to coastal acclimatization can fall away but not coastal to inland.

## **INSTALLATION EXPECTATION:**

- There will be sawing, hammering and other noise during installation
- Make sure you understand the time frame involved & the duration of installation.

Most of wooden floors these days are pre-sealed however if there is a site sealed floor below are some expectations.

### **Things you should not expect from a wood floor**

1. A floor that will not indent. In spite of the term "hardwood", All hardwood flooring will indent under high heel traffic (especially heels in disrepair). The finish that is applied will not prevent the dents. Some timbers are prone to denting more than others depending on the hardness of the species chosen.

2. A floor without cracks between the boards, or within the parquet pieces. Although your new floor may start tight together, as a natural product it will continue to absorb and release moisture. This natural process will cause the flooring to expand and contract from season to season -- resulting in cracks or gaps between some of the pieces in your floor.

In saying this it is not unusual for a floor to remain tight forever.

Elastilon installation systems can prevent shrinkage gaps of between 50 – 70%

Understand that furniture, cabinetry, doors, etc., are fabricated in a factory under ideal conditions and that they contain 1-10 different pieces of wood. Their floor is fabricated in the home and is made up of 300 to thousands of individual different pieces. And that each floor is never to be duplicated – each a truly custom floor of its own.

After the job is completed, go over the job with the team leader.. Maintenance procedure should be reviewed, along with proper protection of furniture(place protection under legs)before it is placed onto the new wood floor and items of concern should be addressed. Remember, wood floors are an investment, proper maintenance will give you years of beauty & enjoyment !

**NB:-** Leave the installers to get on with their work without interfering with them or looking over their shoulder continually. This will ensure a good job & the best results possible. Make sure the floor is protected and/or measures are taken so that other trades and/or people coming in after the wood floors are finished don't scratch and cause unnecessary damage. There is nothing more frustrating than someone else not using due care & causing a good job to go bad.

Should your floors be sanded and sealed/oiled after installation then below is further information on this subject:-

## **SANDING & FINISHING EXPECTATION:**

- There will be noise, dust and some fumes during this process
- Even though the area is sealed off, dust from the sanding process could & will probably infiltrate other areas of the house
- Because fumes will be present during finishing, pilot lights must be turned off (that is only if the sealers are solvent based and flammable)
- Keep pets away from work area at all times
- Make sure you go over the work schedule with the wood floor contractor, know the number of days it will take, when the floor can handle foot traffic, always allow scheduled work to be completed as specified.

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### **Things you should not expect from a wood floor finish that has been sanded & sealed on site;**

1. A table top finish. Each piece of solid flooring sands differently depending on its grain type (plain or quartered) making it virtually impossible for a completely flat surface.
2. Dust-free finish. If your floor is being Sanded & Finished in your home it is not possible to achieve a "clean room" environment. Some dust can or will fall onto the freshly applied top finish.
3. A monochromatic floor. Wood, as a natural product, varies from piece to piece. Remember it is not fabricated – it is milled from a tree and will have grain and colour variations consistent with the grade and species of flooring selected.

## **FLOOR MAINTENANCE GUIDE**

· **Maintain relative humidity level of 30 - 60% throughout the year. Humidifier is recommended to prevent excessive shrinkage in wood floors. Dehumidifier or air conditioner is recommended to prevent dampening, and, therefore, rising of wood floors.**



· Before putting furniture on hardwood floors, attach adequate floor protection (felt pads) to the feet of all furniture to reduce scratches and dents.

· When moving heavy furniture, place a blanket or a scrap of carpet, face down, under each leg; slide furniture carefully.



· It is very important to maintain relative air humidity level in the house of 30 - 50% throughout the year. Humidifier is needed to prevent excessive shrinkage in floors in winter time when homes are heated and air is dry. Dehumidifier or air conditioner is recommended to prevent expanding and, therefore, cupping of wood floors. Of course when Elastilon is used shrinkage can be up to 70 less that with other installation methods



· Keep shoes in good repair. If they lose their protective cap, they will dent the surface. Avoid high-heel shoes.

· Keep pet nails trimmed, paws clean and free of dirt and grease.



· Exposure to sunlight can slightly change shade of your floors. Rearrange your rugs and furniture periodically to avoid shades on your floors. Ensure good uv filtered curtains to prevent changing colour shade.

· Use area rugs in heavily travelled areas, especially if you have a large family. Place rugs at all entrances, as well as by kitchen sink, stove and dishwasher.

· Remove spills promptly using soft cloth with appropriate cleaning product.



· **Never use wet mop and do not clean hardwood floors with water. This can dull the finish and permanently damage your floor. Use only cleaning product recommended by Suntups.**



· Never use wax or oil-based detergents. They will dull or damage finish, leaving greasy spots and making the floor difficult to clean.



· **Frequently** Dust mop, sweep or vacuum floors to prevent dirt and dust from scratching the finish. Use only brush or felt type vacuum head. Be certain the wheels of the vacuum do not damage the finish.

· **Frequently** scatter rugs to remove dirt and grit from under the shoes and prevent wear.

· **Periodically** clean with appropriate non-wax hardwood floor cleaner to preserve the shine on your flooring.

## **HUMIDITY CONTROL**

Wood flooring is a natural product that responds to humidity variation by expanding and contracting. These changes may be noticeable. During warm and humid summer wood expands. During dry weather wood contracts. This seasonal movement is a normal characteristic of wood flooring. The best way to reduce this movement and even make it invisible is to install humidity controls and make sure they function before the flooring is installed. Elastilon installation system also helps prevent and control shrinkage.

In winter, when homes are heated and the air is dry, wood flooring gives up some moisture and therefore shrinks. When it happens thin gaps can appear between planks. This is normal, and a homeowner should be prepared for this. Once indoor heat goes off in the spring and indoor environment regains moisture, these gaps can close up.

To avoid these separations try to add moisture to the air during dry period. The best way is to install humidifier in the air-conditioning or heating system or moveable humidifier in the room with good air circulation. If humidity does not go lower than 45%, no separations will appear at all. To keep permanent control over humidity in the house, install simple humidity meter (hygrometer), so you can constantly monitor humidity level in your house, you can get these Hygrometers from BAMR in Cape – Town on (021) 683 2100 they will send it overnight and they are not expensive



· In warm and humid summer and the rainy seasons when indoor humidity can rise up to 80 -90% the opposite occurs. Wood absorbs moisture from the air and therefore expands. If wood flooring is exposed to extensive

humidity even for a couple of days it can cup. Cupping means that edges of a board are higher than its centre. It can also occur after water is spilled onto the floor and it is absorbed by the wood. It takes a while for humidity to return back to normal. It is very important to be certain before installation that humidity level on the job site is within allowed range 30 - 60%. Remember a normal air conditioner can act as a dehumidifier, and help reduce high humidity. If you have chosen to go with the Elastilon method no cupping will occur but if floor expands into expansion gaps due to the high humidity the floor may bulge up and is easily rectified by taking off the skirting and cutting a new expansion and letting the floor drop flat again.

In extreme cases, if wood expands significantly, boards get under enormous pressure from adjoining boards. As outcome boards can lose structural integrity and crack. To prevent cupping do not allow humidity rise over 60 Keep air conditioner or dehumidifier running during humid summer. If Elastilon is used then cupping and cracking and major repair work can be avoided as said above it is just re-opening the expansions to allow the floor to fall flat again.

If you see cupping in your flooring, first, identify and eliminate the moisture source. It can be plumbing leak in the basement, the terrain of the lot with rain and runoff not moving away from the house or indoor humidity may need to be controlled. It could even be a shower trap leaking and moisture moving under the floor through the walls.

After the source of moisture is controlled cupping can usually be cured. If cupping is moderate, the floor may improve on its own as it dries out over time. If cupping is excessive, floor may need to be sanded and refinished. Be certain that the floor has thoroughly dried before sanding. Elastilon can prevent all this cupping and re-finishing.

· If sanded in the wrong time, before moisture content returns to normal and boards flattened, crowning may occur. Crowning means that the centre of the boards will appear higher than the edges.



## **Normal cupping**

Some cupping should be considered normal, especially in wide planks 127mm and wider and particularly in plain sawn boards. In such boards the growth rings of the tree travel in a slightly curved pattern from one side of the board to the other. This curved pattern produces, with normal moisture content changes a slight convex or concave cup, depending how the rings curve within individual boards. This type of cupping is usually not noticeable unless the floor is viewed across the boards and against a light source such as a patio door or a window wall. It is often noticed while the house is still unoccupied but furnishings usually make the cupping seem more normal as the light reflection is softened and angles of view are changed. In newly built houses before the owners move in it is important to keep good living conditions and the 30 – 60% humidity levels and it is during this time when the house is empty and all windows are closed and there are no curtains installed yet that a sauna/greenhouse effect is caused and can cause a major negative reaction to the floors. Now that you have been informed of this , it is not the installer that will be at fault here.

**NB:- HOME OWNERS IN NEW HOUSES AFTER INSTALLATION DO NOT LOCK UP THE HOUSE WITH NO VENTILATION AND NO FILTER CURTAINS. THIS COULD CAUSE A TOTAL FLOOR FAILURE WHICH WILL NOT BE THE FAULT OF THE INSTALLER AS YOU HAVE NOW BEEN INFORMED.**