

The Importance of Adhesive Spread Rates

Manufacturers typically give a spread rate for their wood floor adhesives. Why? Because the cost-per-square-foot is the only way to compare the cost of adhesives to one another accurately.

For example, take a five-gallon pail that costs \$100 and gets 50 square feet per gallon when spread. A similar adhesive in a three-gallon pail may cost the same \$100 but get 85 square feet per gallon spread rate. One would think the five-gallon bucket would be cheaper since you get five gallons for the same price. But when you do the math, the result is that both products are within a cent of each other in square foot cost (divide the pail cost by the number of gallons in the pail, then divide that number by the square feet per gallon to get the price per square foot).

So, how accurate is the manufacturer's advertised coverage?

It's only as accurate as the trowel you use and the job you are doing that day. Why? Trowels are measuring devices that only allow a certain amount of adhesive to pass through the notches. As important, the subfloor condition and the installer's technique significantly impact the spread. For example, a rough pitted, porous subfloor will accept more adhesive than a smooth subfloor. Also, an installer who presses hard on the trowel will leave less adhesive on the floor than one who spreads lightly or with the trowel at a low (< 45 degrees) angle.

How can you know what your spread rate will be?

Experience and conditions are the best answer. Keep track of how much the adhesive spread on previous jobs and know the conditions (smooth, rough, pitted, etc.). Consistently use the trowel size recommended by the manufacturer. Then use the manufacturer's spread rate and your own experience as a guide to estimate actual adhesive needs for the next job. Discard the trowel when it is worn, and the coverage is not what is specified.

Why do manufacturers even bother to suggest a spread rate?

Quality manufacturers do careful testing to determine how much adhesive is the right amount to hold the wood floor in place through its lifetime and seasonal changes. Part of that formula includes the correct size trowel required to achieve that spread rate. Conditions are 'standard' laboratory simulations, so they can never cover every job site. But they are critical for telling you how much is enough to do the job and thus prevent you from buying more than is needed. So you'll save on adhesive costs when you use the correct size trowel to apply just the right amount of adhesive to do the job.

Visit www.staufusa.com for more information, or call Technical Services at (901) 820-0007.