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Technical Bulletin

## CARPET WRINKLES (“BUCKLES” or “BUBBLES”)

Wrinkles, which can be unsightly as well as create trip hazards, accelerate carpet wear, and cause the carpet to delaminate are rarely a result of manufacturing. Experience shows that proper installation techniques greatly reduce the potential for wrinkling.

Steps that can be taken during installation to prevent carpet from becoming loose are:

First, the carpet should be acclimated to the environment in which it is to be installed. Cold, stiff carpet cannot be properly stretched, and it will eventually become warm, relax, and loose, regardless of how tightly it was originally stretched.

Second, carpet installed via the stretch-in installation method **MUST** be power stretched 1 to 1½% over both the length and width of the carpet (CRI-105 1995\*, Section 9.14).

It is mandatory that the carpet be power stretched using power stretchers with extendable poles, not kicked with a knee kicker. Knee kickers are useful installation tools designed for positioning carpet, not for stretching. Power stretchers with tail pins or spikes, most often referred to as a “stinger” are not to be used because they may damage the face yarns, the primary and secondary backings, the cushion, and possibly even the floor.

Third, use the correct carpet cushion. Cushion that is too thick and too soft (low density) will allow excessive flexing of the carpet causing it to lose its stretch. CRI recommends cushion be no thicker than 7/16 inch for residential applications.

Fourth, the tack strip must be adequate to hold the applied stretch. For distances over 30 feet, use architectural strip with three rows of tacks. Position the strip no more than 3/8 inch from the wall or other vertical surfaces.

Finally, always refer to and follow manufacturer’s installation instructions and/or the *CRI-105 Standard for Installation of Residential Carpet*.

The severity of the potential bubbling or wrinkling can often be influenced by changes in temperature and humidity. In addition, carpet that is loose may also wrinkle and buckle when wet cleaned; however, it will oftentimes return to its original position upon drying.

To correct loose carpet problems, refer to the CRI Technical Bulletin for restretching carpet.

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\* Copies are available from CRI, PO Box 2048, Dalton, GA 30722-2048, 706/278-3176.  
CRI-99  
Carpet Wrinkles