

Sanding Water Damaged Wood Floors

Questions have always been raised, when is the correct time to re-sand a water damaged wood floors? Many times this process is rushed by either the insurance company or the client themselves. Remember, all woods will reach a state of EMC (Equilibrium Moisture Content) base upon temperature and relative humidity. It is important to measure the moisture content of other woods (unaffected by water damage) within the home to find what the current EMC will be.

If the average EMC reading measures 7%, then both the water damaged wood flooring and subfloor need to reach the same 7% EMC before proceeding with the re-finishing process. If the wood floor has mixed species within the floor like Maple, Red Oak and Brazilian Cherry, exotic woods will take much longer to reach the same EMC due to their natural extractive oils. It is not uncommon for this process to take up 3 to 4 months depending on your geographical location and season.

There are restoration companies who use pads placed on the floor to extract out the moisture at an accelerated rate. Restoration techs that operate this equipment may not understand wood drying process and over-dry the floor too quickly, which may cause severe checking which will ruin the floor.

If the wood floor is re-sanded before this equal EMC is reached, it is guaranteed to have a crowned (high in the center of flooring board) appearance months later.

Now the question comes up, who's liable for the re-sand? Of course, the flooring contractor who received payment to restore the wood floor back to its **original condition** is now liable for the re-sand.

There comes a point when the decision needs to be made whether to salvage or replace the floor. Depending on how long the floor has been cupped, severity of edge crushing, potential of mold growth, etc. replacement may be necessary.

After many flooring inspections, the flooring contractor usually assumes the 4% subfloor differential rule for installation is sufficient and proceeds to refinish the wood floor. However, this rule not the same as EMC and the flooring contractor will have to re-sand the floor the second time at no charge to the client or insurance company.

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