



# STARLOG

A SERIES OF FLOORCOVERING BULLETINS

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## SAFETY UNDERFOOT

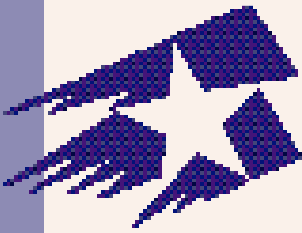
Imagine being one of the unlucky millions of people caught in the great black out of 2003 in New York City. While many of you watched the evening news with interest, those experiencing the power outage faced emotional panic plus the risk of personal injury in pitch-black hallways and elevators. Considering that slip and fall

injuries in the workplace alone are responsible for almost \$5 billion dollars in wage replacement and medical payments, the additional costs for injuries in mercantile centers, hotels, and entertainment complexes caused by natural and unnatural disasters gives one pause to think.

"Safety flooring" used to be synonymous with slip-resistance and drab colors, used primarily on ramps and in entryways. Not anymore. The universe of building safety has expanded the category to include the types of floors available and the spaces they can be used in, without compromising aesthetics. Safety features now include luminescence for visibility and static control for protecting people and equipment. Safety areas have expanded to include practically anywhere in a building. Color on the floor can direct people to building exits. Color choices have blossomed from traditional safety orange and red into the contemporary and coordinated collections. As liability continues to increase, floorcovering manufacturers are developing more inventive products with design appeal that make buildings a safer place.

### POWER SURGE BLACKS OUT NORTHEAST, HITTING CITIES IN CANADA AND 8 STATES; MIDDAY SHUTDOWNS DISRUPT MILLIONS





## A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



As a New Englander, I can tell you that the effects of the largest blackout in North American history were far-reaching. We can't predict or prevent all disasters, but we can be prepared. The flooring industry can contribute by making buildings safer. Emergency planning starts with knowledge, compliance and experience. Our Members can reduce your liability and give you added peace of mind with total project management. We'll help you identify spaces where safety can be improved. We have the independence to recommend the best products from a wide choice of manufacturers. We guarantee our installations, backed by continued superior local and nationwide service.

I'm proud that StarNet Members, with their expertise and integrity, can make a difference in life-enhancing services.

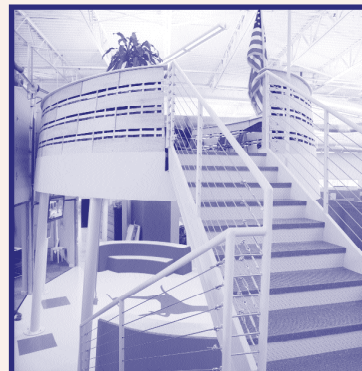
President and CEO



## RUBBER FLOORING AND STAIRWELL SYSTEMS - NATURAL CHOICES

Rubber flooring, with its three-dimensional patterns, is a traditional choice for areas with high slip and fall probability. It meets the ADA COF guidelines, is flame retardant up to Class A, gives off no corrosive gasses, and is not a source for dioxins or furans. Raised-pattern rubber flooring not only performs a safety function, it looks less slippery than smooth flooring, thus giving building occupants added peace of mind.

Rubber offers additional features for making a building a safer place. Its highly resilient cushioning ergonomics help prevent leg fatigue that can start out as mere discomfort, but lead to more serious joint problems. Rubber reduces impact sound, which reduces the noise level



Offices with rubber flooring optimize slip resistance, comfort and design.

Photo courtesy of Johnsonite.



Durable, colorful rubber stairtreads provide safe footing and good looks in stairwells.

Photo courtesy of Nora.

affecting eardrums. The cumulative safety benefits are not only better for people, they improve the bottom line. "Improving safety improves productivity. When you look at ROI, safer buildings pay for themselves over time," says Carmen Pastore, vice president of marketing for Johnsonite.

Rubber flooring offers as much versatility and flexibility in styling as it does in performance. StarNet vendor partners Johnsonite and Nora Rubber offer a variety of surface textures ranging from traditional round disks to weathered, hammered and square designs. Color choices include solids and confetti chips. Maintenance is comparatively minimal, as no waxing is required.



## CARPET—SAFE AND SOUND

Carpets can add greatly to safer interiors. Most carpets naturally fall within the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) recommended coefficient of friction (COF) range for slip resistance. This is especially important in nursing homes, where elderly residents face a higher risk of injury caused by slips and falls. Carpets in geriatric facilities also must be level to avoid snagging toes or footwear, and they must avoid busy patterns that might confuse the perception of aging eyes.

Prior generations of carpets risked literally shocking inhabitants when they walked on the floor and then touched a conductive object such as a metal doorknob. Although not dangerous, the static-caused spark was certainly uncomfortable. Today's humidity-controlled buildings and technologically advanced carpet fibers and backings prevent those unexpected jolts.

Carpet installed with or without padding helps control noise in facilities. The three-dimensional fibers and tufting naturally absorb footfalls and reduce the transmission of sound throughout a building. Reducing noise increases worker productivity, and can contribute to protecting workers from hearing loss caused by excessive, loud sound over time.

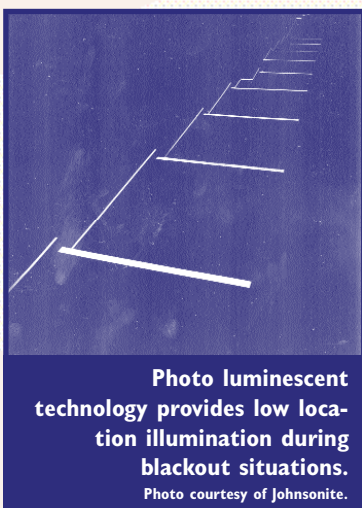


## SURE-FOOTED VINYL

Stairtreads extend rubber's benefits into stairwells throughout a building. Stairwell safety is a growing concern, due to rising insurance costs, an aging population, more demanding local and federal regulations, a litigious environment and a commitment to provide a safe environment for building occupants. Nora Rubber marketing manager Carol Fudge says that their one-piece nosing/tread/riser products eliminate seams that can create a tripping hazard. "The pre-sanded backs also contribute to safety because they improve the adhesive bond between stair and tread, which reduces the risk of movement under heavy traffic." While Nora's stairtreads are essentially prefabricated units, Johnsonite offers unattached risers, stringers and nosings in hinged and angle-back configurations. Whether one-piece or unattached systems are used, your StarNet Member understands how to install stairwell products for compliance with manufacturers' instructions and regulatory guidelines.

Accessories for stairtreads enhance the safety aspects. Visually impaired strips can be inserted into the stairtread nosing, bumping safety up a notch. The strips act as a high-visibility indicator identifying where the step ends or an impending change of height. Nora and Johnsonite offer contrasting strip colors that coordinate with their flooring and stairtread product lines.

There are times when emergency lighting fails, such as a catastrophic power outage or even if a transformer short circuits because an animal wanders into it. "It's at those times that an investment in humanity, not just flooring, brings life-enhancing value to a building," says Pastore. Photoluminescent flooring and stairwell elements can improve egress in an emergency situation, emitting light to guide occupants to safety. Johnsonite's product uses natural and biodegradable raw materials including zinc sulfide to absorb light. "In emergency situations, the product emits light for ten to twelve hours. It works over and over again, never wearing out," says Pastore. Luminous pathways make buildings a safer place by supplementing escape routes and assisting emergency responders in rescues.



**Photo luminescent technology provides low location illumination during blackout situations.**

*Photo courtesy of Johnsonite.*

Low Migliore, a carpet industry consultant and troubleshooter, says manufacturers can make specialty carpets that provide higher levels of safety. "Customized fiber optics for enhanced luminescence and way finding, and carbon fiber filaments for improved resistivity to static, can be woven into the yarn mix. "He emphasizes that working through a StarNet Member is the best way to ensure that custom carpets are manufactured and tested for optimum performance.



**Carpets provide reassuring warmth and traction underfoot in assisted living facilities, adding to the feeling of being in a safe environment.**



**Cafeterias can have it all: colorful custom designs plus slip resistance.**

*Photo courtesy of Altro.*

Vinyl sheet flooring with slip resistant features used to be used primarily in "back of house" spaces such as service corridors and ramps. Now, slip resistant flooring is found in cafeterias, entryways, hallways and operating rooms. Applications include wet and dry spaces. Altro virtually established the category over 50 years ago with products using aluminum oxide, silicon carbide and quartz. Nicholas Fincham, marketing manager, North America, states, "Back then it was very unexciting. The colors were very industrial. Now specifiers have a wealth of beautiful options featuring

heavy duty performance with high style. Specialty flooring used to be the domain of architects, but now, interior designers are getting involved with the specification process. We must meet their need for good-looking products."

Choosing the right floor for the right space is critical. Dominic Rice, Armstrong commercial flooring product manager, says, "Operating rooms will have different needs than a lobby or patient rooms. Application-specific choices are available in sheet and tile, and for both wet and dry walking environments." If standing water is likely, or if hygiene is the main criteria, then sheet flooring plus heat-welded seams are the logical choice. Heat-welded seams add to building safety by eliminating trip hazards, and improving asepsis by eliminating spaces where dirt and moisture can collect. On the other hand, in areas where cost is a major factor, and where easy installation and removal is tantamount, slip retardant tile is the best choice.

Altro and Armstrong floors meet or exceed the ADA and Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) COF guidelines. Slip retardant flooring feels different underfoot, "a little grabby," says Fincham and Rice, so the walker knows they're on a safety product. The floors are a little harder to clean than smooth flooring because the floor is textured to create traction. "You need to strike a balance between cleanability and safety," says Fincham. Rice agrees, adding, "Regularly cleaning with a mop and scrubbing brushes (not pads) to get down into the valleys is very important."

Both companies offer products with the added benefit of ESD control for use where the build-up of static charges could harm sensitive equipment or a manufacturing process. These floors will protect sensitive healthcare and electronic manufacturing, repair and assembly spaces against damage caused by electronic shocks.



**Produce areas are prime candidates for slip retardant flooring.**

*Photo courtesy of Armstrong.*



## **PARTNERING WITH A STARNET FLOORING PROFESSIONAL TO REACH YOUR SAFER BUILDING GOALS**

Making the right flooring choice can be complicated. There are many aspects of safety to consider and numerous product options available. Viable solutions exist for specific spaces. Consult your StarNet Member to assist in performing a needs analysis of your project including an audit of traffic, how the space is used, who occupies the space, maintenance expectations, and also budget considerations. StarNet Members are ready to help as you weigh the liability issues, the compliance and code regulations and the myriad product choices.

### **CONDUCT A NEEDS ANALYSIS WITH YOUR STARNET MEMBER**

**Budget; initial installation and lifecycle cost**

**Codes & compliance requirements**

**Safety concerns (slip & fall; ergonomics, etc.)**

**Traffic levels; traffic patterns**

**Wet and/or dry area**

**How the space is used (operating room, lobby, etc.)**

**Who uses the space (elderly, John Q. Public, etc.)**

**Maintenance method and frequency**

**Aesthetics & coordination with other finishes**

**For more information about StarNet, visit us online at [www.starnetflooring.com](http://www.starnetflooring.com) or call 1-800-787-6381.**

**One in a series of Bulletins from your Commercial Floorcovering Professionals at:**



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