

ANSWERS TO EVERYDAY CONCERNS ABOUT WATERPROOF FLOORING¹

Waterproof is a relative term. Merriam-Webster defines it as: able to withstand exposure to water without damage or loss of function; not damaged by water.²

Why is it Important?

Simply stated, it means peace of mind. Spills are inevitable and kids and animals can be tough on floors. When investing in a new floor, you want the assurance that it will last, and look beautiful for years to come. While you don't expect to salvage your kitchen floor from a flood or major plumbing leak that left two feet of water and mud in your home, you do want to know that normal spills and messes won't ruin your flooring.

Resilient Flooring

Resilient flooring – a category of flooring products including luxury vinyl tile, linoleum, rubber and more – has a well-deserved reputation for its impervious surface that is affected very little from surface spills, heavy wet-mopping, and more. For instance, sheet vinyl is a product that comes in 6', 12' or even wider rolls. When it is fully glued down and the perimeter and "cut-arounds" are caulked, the surface is seamless. This means water will not seep into the seams. Luxury vinyl tile and planks (LVT/LVP) and rigid core products are similar in that these products are not impacted by surface water exposure. In many instances, LVT and rigid core products are designed to lock together, providing tight-fitting joints that minimize risk of damage from surface spills.



Waterproof Declarations

A resilient flooring waterproof declaration means that the flooring product will not exhibit objectionable swelling or peaking when exposed to topical water. Test methods explained in ASTM³ Standard F 3261⁴ ensure consumer confidence since products from various manufacturers are tested in a prescribed, consistent, and precise way. Testing requires water submersion for 24-hours after which the product is measured for swell. To be deemed "waterproof", a product without an attached backing that undergoes this test method cannot swell more than 2% and products with an attached backing cannot swell more than 5%.

It is important to note that waterproof declarations generally cover the product only and exclude installation. Water from below the flooring can still cause damage. For example, the porous nature of concrete means that water from under your home can seep up through the concrete sub-floor resulting in issues with odor, mold or mildew. Experts in the concrete industry recommend a below-slab vapor barrier to stop the upward vapor drive from potentially damaging your home's sub-floor or finished flooring.

Resilient flooring does not protect from prolonged and excessive exposure to water, including plumbing failures or catastrophic events like floods. These incidents are excluded from most product warranties.

Peace of Mind

A waterproof declaration as described is focused on the product itself. Due to the structure of these products and the materials used in the manufacturing process, a resilient floor will not swell, buckle, or lose its integrity when exposed to topical water. Resilient flooring products have impervious, non-porous surfaces. To provide consistency between products and manufacturers, the test method within the ASTM 3261 specification provides the technical basis for evaluating a product's resistance to water exposure.

With these important facts from the Resilient Floor Covering Institute, you can be confident that you are investing in a durable, waterproof, flooring solution that will stand up to frequent surface spills.

¹ Prepared by the [Resilient Floor Covering Institute \(RFCI\)](#) 1 14 2021. [RFCI Member Manufacturers](#)

² "waterproof." [Merriam-Webster.com](#)

³ [American Society of Testing Materials \(ASTM\)](#)

⁴ ASTM F3261 Standard Specification for Resilient Flooring in Modular Format with Rigid Polymeric Core