



One Man's Professional Journey to Carve a Niche for Flooring Forensics in the Cleaning & Restoration Industry!*

Robert "Bavarian Bob" Blochinger

This week IAQ Radio+ brought our growing and loyal group of listeners another unique show in the Moisture Mob ongoing series. Bob Blochinger is a fierce advocate for flooring forensic experts specializing in third party evaluations and oversight of complex installations.

Background

"Bob, as you know a fellow Moisture Mob associate and Brooklyn boy (Pete Consigli) helped organize today's show, in the spirit of the Restoration Global Watchdog we'd like some clarification on a couple of things".

1. ***How did you get your Moisture Mob nickname Bavarian Bob?*** Bob was born in Bavaria, Germany and immigrating to the USA as a young child in the 1950's straight to Brooklyn.
2. ***What is speaking Brooklynese?*** Moving from Brooklyn to Florida, Bob's vernacular still includes: "forget about it", "are you talking to me" and "whatchamacallit" which surprisingly is according to Merriam Webster is a noun defined as: something that is hard to classify or whose name is unknown or forgotten.



Nuggets mined from today's episode:

You started out doing construction in the family business in NYC what type of construction did the family do? Exterior cleaning of brownstone buildings with

steam and acids, exterior painting, waterproofing, window replacement and concrete placement and finishing.

How did you get into flooring? Working on a family business project in Florida, he met some flooring installers who told him that floor installers always worked indoors where it was air conditioned; they lied!

Since then you have been involved in most every aspect of the flooring business.

From your perspective, where is the flooring industry today? What are the important trends in flooring? As to trends in products, I was never a “retailer”. My background is: specification, installation, and maintenance. LVT (Luxury Vinyl Tile) is the bane of the industry because: we don’t know what it will do once it’s on the floor, we have no control over installation workmanship training and we don’t know where it’s going to be disposed when replacement time comes.

What are some of the most important mistakes contractors (gen. construction & restoration) make? Lack of training, not following manufacturer guidelines and installation instructions. Failure to test and monitor concrete substrate for moisture. The adhesive bonds the flooring to the substrate: using incorrect adhesive causes bonding problems, excessive adhesive will ooze out of seams.

Let’s talk a bit about moisture and flooring focusing first on concrete. What are your thoughts on how the standards prescribe moisture measurement in concrete? As there are two ways to test, drilling a hole or placing an object on top to measure moisture. These methods are snapshots, measuring moisture at only a specific place and time. As flooring guys, when the HVAC is not working and operational, we have no control of the environment. The industry standards are just that; a guideline of action for the flooring guys; however general contractors often work on tight time schedules which may be compromised when these standards are followed.

What is a popular type of flooring that is commonly screwed up and what simple things can contractors do to avoid expensive call backs and lawsuits? There is no one popular flooring, they all get “screwed up” by ignorance of the laws of physics and actions of untrained workers.

What type of flooring do you have in your home? Currently it is a “waterproof” laminate and carpet. My wife picked the colors.

Are you concerned about flooring in buildings that have been vacant because of COVID? Yes, due to the potential inspiration of the HVAC system, lack of continued maintenance.

During construction or remodeling how does a contractor or building owner determine the best type of flooring for a particular building? Research, ask the professionals, don't look to form and function or color, look to construction, fiber, the various components that make up the product. Will it work for your space? Will product perform for the service life expectations?

The IICRC just put out a new flooring standard. Where you involved in the development of the standard and what are your overall thoughts on the standard?

Yes, I was, as an advisor and it's a complimentary standard to the carpet standard we have had for years, of which I am involved in as well. These standards are important for the simple fact; it's a starting point for professional and through inspection protocol. The standard refers to common floor testing standards: ASTM 1869 (Standard Test Method for Measuring Moisture Vapor, Emission Rate of Concrete Subfloor Using Anhydrous Calcium Chloride), ASTM 2170 (Standard Test Method for Determining Relative Humidity in Concrete Floor Slabs Using in situ Probes) and the "hood test". Floor testing is like taking a human's temperature and blood pressure. Each measurement tells you something; both measurements when used together tell you much more.

Is it a prescriptive or performance type standard? Well it is really both, a baseline protocol for evaluation of floor covering. And a step-by-step list of action items to form a conclusion. Bob currently chairs the IICRC's inspection division.

Over the years, I've inspected a number of homes in south Florida several months after hurricanes. The homes I wish to discuss are all: built on slabs and had marble, ceramic tile, or terrazzo installed. All the homes had less than 6" of standing water. Tramex meter showed areas of moisture under the flooring. The flooring appeared to be in good condition with no visible staining, discoloration, or cracking.

1. Must the floors be replaced or are they salvageable? Public adjusters insist the flooring is a total loss and since it can't be matched all the flooring in the home must be replaced. Impedance meters will only go $\frac{3}{4}$ " thru a material. Marble and stone

as floor coverings are not damaged by water events to the point of replacement. When hollow areas are found under them, indicates that it's an original installation issue as to volume of setting materials and workmanship. Cement-based terrazzo, is also undamaged by water. Epoxy terrazzo is vulnerable to water and will pop off.

2. Will the floor and slab dry naturally over time or must the flooring and slab be "force dried", if so how? Drying contractors insist costly heat or desiccant dehumidifying process must be used to dry floor and slab ASAP. Drying the substrate is dependent on the water volume, water content, water source. Is it clean, gray, black, from the canals or the ocean? Also, how much and how long was water standing and the HVAC operation, was it on or off due to electrical power loss. A wood substrate will dry, eventually. Concrete of course will never dry, but it will return to a state of normal moisture content. The drying process does include the gadgets the contractors like to charge for easy money, and they do work. However, desiccant and heat drying must be monitored very closely to prevent damage caused by over drying such as shrinkage.

3. As the water is presumed to have contained salt will that over time damage the floor or slab? Homeowner is concerned that salt may be destructive and cause damage over time. For a full researched answer, destructive testing is warranted; however, if leftover flooring stock is not available, this is not possible. A professional cleaner may clean any water marks off the stone. However, when contaminants are imbedded that's a different story. Some materials such as marble and granite may be repolished in situ. High intensity light and blacklight may reveal microbial growth and/or foreign matter.

As to salts, that can create another scenario, as leaving deposits on all the flooring product surface and start to "burn" the surface and breakdown fibers. Much like efflorescence coming from concrete thru grout joints in tile installations. Excessive alkalinity.

Then there are the critters and sea creatures that come with the ocean high tide and surge as well as canal overflow.

"A picture is worth one thousand words!" Napoleon Bonaparte

Bob's guided tour of flooring problems that he has encountered and



left the IAQ Radio audience asking for more!

- Manufacturing defects combined with improper installation.
- Damage to wood flooring on upper floor caused by overdyeing downstairs.
- Poor pattern matching on high end woven carpets.
- Poor seaming on high end woven carpet.
- Paint dripped on Wool carpet.
- Damage to exterior tiles caused by high pressure washing and improper cleaner.

Bob's closing comments:

- Training is missing, keeping flooring inspectors very, very busy.
- Flooring inspection is a career path, get off your knees by age 45 so you can still walk at age 65.
- Bob was elected to IICRC board of directors. He advocates flooring inspection as a career path. Wants to help inspectors become better business people, perform better and make more money.
- He volunteers on 4 industry boards, 2 training and 2 inspection. Active with training orgs on both east and west coasts. On west coast he is working with a Job Corps training academy for flooring installation.
- Flooring inspectors who understands the investigation and troubleshooting of moisture and flooring problems, can write report, can charge ½ the price of an attorney and always has a job.
- Architects know the why, contractors know the how and inspectors figure out what went wrong.
- On large products provides guidance and oversight before, during and after.

G. Pete Consigli (Global Restoration Industry Watchdog)

- In retrospect, could have titled the show, "Everything you wanted to know about flooring but were afraid to ask."
- IEPs and restorers don't understand the important role of 3rd party flooring inspectors.
- Flooring inspectors are moisture experts.
- Flooring inspectors have a marketing problem, the need to raise awareness because too many people don't know they need 3rd party flooring inspectors.

- Bob is a great spokesperson and advocate for the flooring inspection industry!

Z-Man signing off

Trivia:

What is the oldest consumer protection law still in existence?

Answer: Bavarian Reinheitsgebot (beer purity law)

Answered by: Don Weekes, Ottawa, Ontario Canada

** The words "Flooring Forensics" is Trademarked for the Inspection Services of Roland Vierra. IAQ Radio did a podcast with Mr. Vierra on April, 17, 2020. Bob Blochinger and Roland are associates in the Moisture Mob and will be doing a collaborative IAQ Radio podcast in March, 2021 to expand on the meaning of "Flooring Forensics" as applied in the Inspection industry.*