



Repairing carpet damage left by office furniture

Try homespun solutions before calling in cleaning professionals



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By Doug Berjer

When office carpet becomes damaged it's time to repair or replace. If the appearance is still fair to good, and the only noticeable harm is furniture impressions, the former is the most viable and cost-effective option.

Carpet indentations are the result of heavy furniture placed on a carpet, which pushes the carpet pile down, leaving a dent. If the furniture has been on the carpet for a relatively short period (a few weeks or less), these dents will likely correct themselves over time. No special attention is needed. However, when heavy furniture stays in the same spot for several months or years, it essentially crushes the carpet fibres, leaving a significant dent that will likely require time, attention and patience to rectify.

Fortunately, there are ways to eliminate carpet dents. Some of these solutions are surprisingly homespun (but effective), while others require calling in cleaning professionals.

If there are just a few dents to tackle, try the following:

- Using a coin, "groom" the dent, pulling the carpet pile up with the coin. Follow-up by vacuuming the area.
- Place ice cubes over the dents and allow them to melt; often, this causes the carpet fibres to rise, eliminating the dent.
- Spray the dents with clean water. Place a damp towel over the area and then iron over the towel. A steam iron can also be placed over the dents but keep the iron a few inches above the problem area to avoid damaging the carpet.
- Groom the dent and surrounding area with a carpet grooming tool, also known as a carpet rake. Vacuum and repeat.

These methods may not produce immediate results and, therefore, may have to be repeated. Often, once building managers and cleaning professionals undertake these corrective measures, carpet dents slowly correct themselves. However, if these methods are not successful or there are too many dents over a large area to use these techniques, professional assistance may be needed.

Most building managers and cleaning professionals are familiar with carpet extractors. Using a wand, these systems apply moisture to carpets under high-pressure and then extract the moisture and soils with powerful vacuum systems all in one process. However, many managers and cleaning professionals are less familiar with the use of hot water extractors to remove carpet dents. Some hot water extractors have "perfect heat" systems, which heat water to more than 200 F at the wand tip. Heat helps loosen soils and makes cleaning chemicals work more effectively. In the case of carpet dents, it also loosens carpet fibres, helping them rebound and return to their normal state.

As a final step, carpet cleaners generally groom problem areas with a carpet rake. Allow 24 hours for the dents to disappear (even though the carpet may dry sooner). If some indentations remain, groom and vacuum the carpet again.

While most carpet indentation problems can be solved over time, severe problems can be permanent. Managers that must grapple with carpet dents on a regular basis should be aware that there are ways to prevent this issue from occurring in the first place. For instance, have tenants place gliders or coasters under furniture, and encourage them to select furniture with legs attached to an elongated or circular base, which evens out the weight of the furniture. Also, have custodial workers move furniture and vacuum under it from time to time. This can minimize the severity of carpet indentations.

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