

Ask the Experts!

MHA is packed with smart minds and collectively way too much advice to digest at once or when needed. In this Ask the Experts! column, we get an answer (ideally two) to a question you have right now, instead of referencing a column we ran last last year or advising you which class to take (unless, in fact, that's the best answer!). Email your question to tom.cassidy@mmha.com; anonymous questions will not be acknowledged, anonymous answers will not be printed, and, alas, submission of a question doesn't mean we'll find an answer or print it here (but we will get back to you). So ask away ... before I add more fineprint! Can I recycle hardback books/spiral-bound/metallic-ink covers? Which shrubs are most resilient in Minnesota? Why do birds suddenly appear every time you are near?

Question: A new tenant has complained that my landscaping company is using weed killers that may be harmful to his pet. I've never been asked about this before, but when checking with my vendor, they assured me it is safe. Is there a way that I can check to make sure it is safe? I don't want to lose a good vendor or upset a new resident. Barrett Lawn Care's answer to this question is this month's featured Expert response . . .

Pet Safety and Herbicide Use

BY CHRIS REIFSTECK, BARRETT LAWN CARE, INC., 612-866-7522, BARRETTLAWNCARE.COM

Herbicides are used in agricultural and horticultural industries as a preventative or curative control for any type of weed. A weed is defined as any plant in an unwanted area. This means that grass, corn, roses, etc. could all be classified as a weed depending on the environment they are in. With that said, most residents are mainly concerned with the beauty of their landscape and keeping their broadleaf weeds at a manageable level to maintain a lush, healthy turf. Herbicides work great for this purpose, but the flip side is people are concerned with the effects it may or may not have on pets and children. Many factors need to be considered when determining the safety of a pesticide.

Pesticides, including fertilizers, have to go through rigorous tests administered by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to prove that these chemicals meet standards set by the agency. If any harmful effects are found, the manufacturer must correct the problem and/or provide special instructions on the label of the chemical for proper use. It is also important to note that the label is the law.

The Restricted Entry Interval (REI) is a statement on the label indicating how long after the application people and pets must stay off the target area. Entering the target area could be a risk to the health of the individual.

Herbicides can be applied using a liquid formulation or by granules. Granules are typically "watered in," getting the granules down to the soil level where their target is. Once watered in, pets and children are usually safe to move around with all the herbicide below the level of grass. Liquid formulations are more commonly used

as a curative control after spring through the rest of the summer. Once the liquid is applied, it takes 4-5 hours to fully dry and enter the vascular system of the plant. The law states certified applicators must use a 2-day minimum REI on signs posted around a property. This is to ensure the safety of the people around the property and clearly stating that a chemical has been applied.

At the end of the day there is no right or wrong answer to this question. The truth is if you are exposed to a concentrated dose of herbicide, you or your pets could get sick. The truth is also contingent on whether or not you and your pet stay off the area that has had an application until the sign says it is okay to re-enter; if you do, you and your pets will be totally fine. There needs to be a compromise between the vendor and the client. If a property is to be treated with a herbicide, people need

to respect that when that job is being done that they utilize a different space for outdoor activities. The vendor also needs to respect the wishes of the client by strategically posting enough signs so that everyone on the property – residents, guests, staff – are aware of the work being done. A one- or two-day advance notice is also helpful for residents whether or not it affects their plans.

Considering some of the chemicals we applied 50 years ago, massive strides have been made in finding safer formulas to use. I believe 20 years from now we will be on the verge of some really great pesticides that are completely environmentally safe, pet safe, and children safe. Until then there will always be people on both sides debating the pros and cons of herbicides. Just

ask the experts continued next page



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ask the experts *from page 47*

like any other function of daily life, if we work together and communicate, everyone should be able to find a suitable outcome. ■

Also, here's an additional response from from Dave Peller, ProTurf, 952-469-8680 Ext. 203:

All turf pesticides are registered with the EPA. They are tested for toxicity to non-target plants, environmental impact, soil persistence, and how long it takes to break them down in the soil; and those are just some of the criteria a pesticide needs to meet to be approved for use. By the time a turf pesticide is applied it can be diluted 100-300 times with water. Many products are considered practically nontoxic in their diluted state. People can have allergies to penicillin, however that does not mean penicillin is harmful to those that are not. Some people may be allergic to pesticides, however in my 35 years of being licensed by the state of Minnesota, I have not encountered one.

Q What are the different ways I can address my need for new floor covering in our roughly 25'x15' wifi lounge? We want to replace the old carpet tiles, which were installed in the late '90s. We don't have a lot budgeted for this, but we don't want to skimp on quality, especially durability. Could you give me a range of options and prices?

Shelly Perpera, Bloomington Carpet One, shelly@bloomingtoncarpetone.com, answered:

There are a few options in this scenario. The easiest and least expensive option would be to find some remnants and have them made into rugs by binding the edges. You could more than likely find these at a local flooring retailer. This is merely a "cover-up" for the time being, but could probably be done for around \$300 if you were to use (2) 12'X12' rugs. The next option up would be to find a remnant large enough to actually install wall-to-wall in the room. For the amount of carpet needed, this could be accomplished for around \$600, installed, if it's being glued down to a bare floor, \$700 if stretching in over pad. If you wanted more selections and decided to order broadloom carpet, first make sure to go with a nylon for durability. It will hold up much better over time than less expensive fibers. This route could run from \$800

for a decent product if glued down, \$915 if installing with pad. The last and most durable, user-friendly option, would be to install carpet tiles. They will be the longest lasting option, but also the most expensive. In a room this size you could expect to pay approximately \$950-\$1000 installed.

Q Last year a number of major floorcovering dealers stopped selling Chinese-made laminate due to formaldehyde levels. Is there a way to test my existing floors to see if they should be removed, or can they be coated to be made safe? If replacement or coating is necessary, am I fully responsible for the costs or does the vendor or manufacturer who sold it to me pay all or part of this health-related replacement? How do I know that what I'm purchasing today is safe?

Nicholas Kasper, Renovation Systems, nkasper@renovationsystems.com, responded:

Is there a way to test the Formaldehyde in the floor? The United States Consumer Product Safety Commission put out an article entitled "An Update on Formaldehyde" in 2015 and that is where I found this summary: *Formaldehyde is a colorless, yet strong smelling volatile organic chemical (VOC), which means that it vaporizes at room temperature. It is something that is present naturally in the air we breathe, but it's normally at very low levels, 0.03 parts per million. If the levels of Formaldehyde are higher than normal*

(0.03 parts per million) the symptoms can be severe. The symptoms are: stinging, burning eyes, excessive tearing, burning nose and throat, runny nose, blocked sinuses, sneezing, cancer, chest tightness, wheezing, asthma, skin rashes, headaches, mood changes, insomnia, attention deficit, nausea and impairments to dexterity.

Wow, no wonder this stuff is regulated! Some individuals have higher sensitivity to it than others and, if these symptoms are present, the affected individual should see their physician; and, if they believe that the symptoms are related to formaldehyde, you may want to have the levels tested. For more information, and to add clarity to what I said, please see the article in its entirety at: <http://www.cpsc.gov/>

Can it be sealed? Hopefully the above information takes you to a conclusion that sealing it isn't necessary. The article I referenced above said that the wood could be sealed with a product that does not have VOCs, however most laminate type products have a wear layer that is very cleanable and clear sealants will not bond to the surface. Based on that information I wouldn't recommend sealing it, but a coatings company may tell you that it can be done.

Are you fully responsible for the costs? Maybe, maybe not. You may be able work out a deal with the vendor that did the installation. If you asked about the safety of the product on the front end, you have a much better chance of getting their assistance.

ask the experts continued on page 48

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budget *from page 33*

to housing development and increasing housing affordability. We look forward to working with HUD to identify land use regulations, permit, and code and process challenges that encourage, not inhibit, the development and preservation of affordable housing.

Sustaining the allocation for FHA multifamily lending activity, when paired with a recent decision to modify insurance premiums for certain FHA multifamily loans, will also benefit rental housing markets across the country.

Tax Policy

On the tax front, the President's budget proposal would significantly inhibit the construction and development of multifamily housing. Specifically, the President proposes to: **Limit** the amount of capital gain that a taxpayer may defer as part of a like-kind exchange to \$1 million per year; **Increase** the maximum capital gains rate from 20 percent to 24.2 percent; **Tax** carried interest generated through real estate activities at ordinary income rates instead of current-law capital gains rates; and **Impose** a 3.8 percent surtax on pass-through income, including ordinary income and capital gains that is not currently subject to the self-employed contributions tax. The surtax would

apply to individuals earning over \$200,000 and joint filers earning over \$250,000.

More positively, the President is proposing constructive steps to bolster the successful Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) that has financed nearly 2.8 million apartments and served 13.3 million residents since its inception in 1986. In particular, the budget proposal would enable states to convert unused private activity bonds into low-income housing tax credits. Finally, housing affordability would be bolstered by enabling the LIHTC to serve families earning up to 80 percent of area median income (AMI) so long as 40 percent of the units in a given development are reserved for people whose average income is below 60 percent of AMI.

Operations and Risk Management

Increasingly, apartments are confronted with growing numbers of flooding events nationwide each year. The President's budget proposal has the potential to impact aspects of business operations and property management for multifamily firms in this area. The proposal includes: **A \$3111 million request** for the National Flood Insurance Program's mapping efforts, which impact the rate multifamily property owners pay for flood coverage; and **Prioritizes pre-disaster mitigation efforts** to lessen

taxpayer liability after a flood disaster by investing \$54 million in the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Pre-Disaster Mitigation Grant Program.

Technology and Risk Management

Technology is rapidly changing the multifamily industry. Operators of apartments rely on web-based connectivity for property operations, as well as corporate functions. Apartment residents increasingly want more, better and faster telecommunications services. With the increased reliance on telecommunications services at apartment communities comes the heightened risk for data breaches and the theft of highly sensitive information.

The President's budget addresses several important cybersecurity and broadband access priorities for the industry: **Provides** continued funding for the ConnectHome Program to expand access to broadband to children and families living in HUD-assisted housing across the nation; **Bolsters** our nation's cyber defenses with a historic 35 percent increase in funding allocated to cybersecurity; and **Implements** the President's "Cybersecurity National Action Plan (CNAP)," which provides near-term and long-term strategies to address the growing challenges of cybersecurity faced by government, businesses and consumers. ■

ask the experts *from page 46*

assistance. Also, if you chose the contractor that was a well-established company versus a start-up or an installer working out of the back of his truck, you will have

better luck with their help. Hopefully you have a good working relationship with them and they won't leave you high and dry. If the laminate has to be completely replaced I would think that they could at minimum discount the labor and materials for the work. Based on my experience the manufacturer themselves will do nothing to help you.

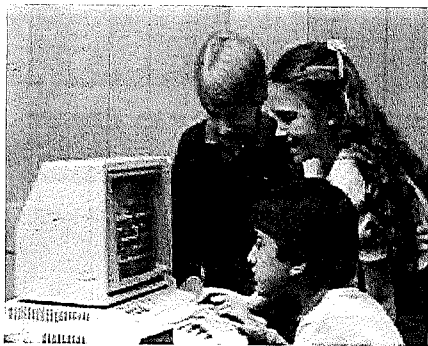
How do you know if the product you are purchasing today is safe? Ask for proof that the products are Floor Score certified to meet the strict indoor air quality. If it's not, don't buy it. If it's carpet you are buying, the Green Label Plus certification is what you would be looking for.

Shelly Perpera, Bloomington Carpet One, answered this question as well with:

There was one major retailer who was caught last year by *60 Minutes* who was sourcing products with excessive formaldehyde levels. They have since stopped purchasing such materials and are offering

free testing to any customer of theirs who is concerned over the levels in their home. You can request a free kit from them, then send it to an independent lab that will analyze the results, also at no cost to you. If you did not buy product from that retailer, but still have possible concerns about formaldehyde, you can purchase a test kit on your own for as low as \$45 that includes the lab fee. The easiest testing instrument is called a Dosimeter and can be found at www.formaldehydetests.com. There is no method to "coat" the existing floor; at least none with proven success. The flooring industry had so much attention brought to it last year because of this story that the products you will find now are all but guaranteed to meet the federal guidelines and CARB 2 compliance. All reputable manufactures have put out specific statements regarding their compliances and you can find those at their websites. Of course, to be extra safe – buy products that are made in the USA! ■

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