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2007 Represents Milestone for Laminate Flooring Segment

Surfaces 2007 represented the anniversary of the first meeting of the North American Laminate Flooring Association

WASHINGTON- Ten years ago, a group of leaders in North America's relatively new laminate flooring segment were in discussions regarding the importance of standards for the industry. After several meetings, the North American Laminate Flooring Association (NALFA) held its first meeting as a chartered group at Surfaces in 1997.

"There was a small group of us who were passionate about establishing standards on what a laminate floor is and what could reasonably be expected of its performance," said Bill Dearing, president of NALFA. **"Our first official meeting was held at Surfaces and representatives from Pergo, Wilsonart, Uniboard, Formica and Witex were among those early members. We discussed numerous topics related to the organization such as expectations of standards, formation of the technical division and spreading the word about the formation of the group. In addition, the first election of officers took place at this meeting."**

A decade later, NALFA has grown to include 11 regular members and 17 associate members, and has made important strides in establishing voluntary standards for the laminate flooring industry in both the residential and commercial arenas.

When asked what he considers the organization's greatest achievement, Dearing replied, "While our organization has made several strides to better the laminate flooring segment, the accomplishment that comes to the top of my mind is the voluntary performance standard's settings for residential, light commercial and commercial markets. It was really a positive time for our organization because producers and our valued associate members, while maintaining a strong

competitive position in the marketplace, were able to agree that performance standards were beneficial to our industry. Because of these standards, we were able to gradually raise awareness that there are differences among laminate flooring.”

This past year the organization took another critical stride towards improving quality control in the industry by encouraging its members to display the NALFA Certification Seal on product packaging to promote quality control in the industry and encouraging associate members to promote NALFA-certified products.

”An immediate goal of NALFA is to educate the trade on the importance of the NALFA Certification Seal,” says Dearing. “The NALFA Certification Seal on product packaging is an easy method for recognizing the quality of the product.”

Looking to the future, NALFA hopes the NALFA Certification Seal will reach the consumer level of recognition, which will allow purchasers to make a choice on laminate flooring while realizing that if the product carries a NALFA Certification Seal it has been properly evaluated and has passed the appropriate tests for residential, light commercial and commercial.

“Once the awareness of the NALFA Certification Seal reaches this level, the consumer, dealer, installer or specifier could then weigh the importance of purchasing a long-term use product that has been certified to perform at certain standards against one that does not carry such an assurance,” says Dearing. “The visible NALFA Certification Seal will give an assurance of product performance that will lead to an increase in sales of laminate flooring within North America: an obvious goal of NALFA.”

Formed in 1997, the North American Laminate Flooring Association is an organization of U.S. and Canadian manufacturers and importers of laminate flooring products. NALFA's mission is to encourage the establishment and maintenance of high standards in laminate flooring in North America, to recognize those that meet these standards and to recognize Associate Members who

provide products and services to the laminate flooring industry. For more information, visit www.nalfa.com.

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