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**NALFA Certified Laminate Flooring:
Better Flooring Choice for the Environment and for Health**

WASHINGTON – Laminate flooring is light on natural resources, recyclable, and free of air-damaging chemicals; and builders are quickly catching on. Builders are abandoning traditional flooring options such as carpeting or hardwood and opting for a much more sensible alternative in laminate flooring.

Not only does this relatively new option in flooring offer a wide range of design possibilities, it's durable and cost-effective. Also, North American Laminate Flooring Association (NALFA) certified products can be used in homes and buildings that meet Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) standards for environmentally sustainable construction.

“Builders are opting for laminate flooring products rather than conventional hardwood and carpet flooring because of its environmentally friendly and health favorable characteristics,” explains E.C. “Bill” Dearing, president of NALFA. “Unlike traditional wood flooring, manufacturing laminate does not involve the harvesting of old-growth hardwoods as does that of wood flooring. Laminate floorings are primarily made from recycled wood and other wood derivatives, such as wood fiber and pulps extracted from wood, such as paper.”

According to NALFA, laminate flooring can even be recycled after use. When dismantled, the majority of floor boards can be put back into the production process. The grinded boards can be used in agriculture and horticulture as a growing medium. Disposing of laminate flooring is a safe and cost-effective process; it's a product that confers protection – rather than imposing a burden – on the environment.

Laminate flooring is also an appealing choice when considering the needs of buyers interested in a living environment with fewer allergens. According to “The Green Guide,” recent EPA studies suggest that household carpeting may contain some toxic chemicals, including the pesticide permethrin to decrease dust mites. Because of this chemical presence, many consumers concerned with their home environment ask for laminate flooring which offers smooth surfaces that do not provide breeding conditions for dust mites. Furthermore, many of the adhesives and coatings used in the manufacture of laminate flooring are water-based products. Laminate flooring also comes free of solvents, wood preservatives and other chemicals that could agitate allergies or asthma.

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Overall air quality is yet another important health reason builders and consumers prefer laminate flooring. “The Green Guide” also states that natural hardwood floorings release some formaldehyde or VOCs, especially in the first few weeks after installation. Laminate flooring emissions come in well below the permissible levels for formaldehyde and VOCs. Perhaps most importantly, the smooth surfaces of laminate flooring are easy to clean, making cleaning detergents practically a thing of the past – even more good news for the planet.

Being such an environmentally-friendly choice has helped laminate flooring to largely increase its popularity since it appeared in the U.S. in 1994. Shipments of laminate flooring within the U.S. are expected to increase 100 percent, from the 575 million square feet reported in 2004, to 1.2 billion square feet in 2009. More and more consumers want to make environmentally-conscious choices. These consumers as well as builders and retailers alike continually look to NALFA for informative advice when choosing laminate flooring.

As the laminate flooring industry continues to expand, the need for quality control of products also increases. NALFA continually promotes high standards for laminate flooring products.

Builders and retailers who identify the NALFA Certification Seal recognize quality materials and no longer run the risk of purchasing inadequate laminate flooring products.

“Builders and retailers should look for the NALFA Certification Seal displayed on laminate flooring products to ensure their choice is of the highest standards set forth by NALFA,” Dearing explains. “We are very passionate about promoting standards for what laminate flooring is and what can reasonably be expected of its performance. Quality measures are important to aide consumers, builders and retailers in distinguishing between the vast number of products, so NALFA awards products that pass vigorous testing with their Certification Seal.”

Formed in 1997, the North American Laminate Flooring Association is an organization of U.S. and Canadian manufactures 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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