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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 studies show consumers are quickly catching on. Consumers are abandoning traditional flooring options such as carpeting or hardwood and opting for the much more sensible alternative of laminate flooring.

Not only does this flooring option offer a wide range of design possibilities, it's also durable and cost-effective. Perhaps more importantly, North American Laminate Flooring Association (NALFA) certified products are an excellent choice for consumers with environmental and health concerns.

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

Industry trade publications report some laminate flooring manufacturers are using 98 percent less newly harvested wood than conventional engineered hardwood products.

According to NALFA, its certified 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.

Furthermore, a NALFA-certified manufacturer reported that one of its facilities diverts all of its post-industrial laminate waste from the landfill and uses it as fuel primarily in their own waste-to-energy facility.

Laminate flooring can also provide a healthier 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.

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Because of this chemical presence, many consumers concerned with their home environment choose 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.

Overall air quality is yet another important reason 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 are also making environmentally-conscious choices. These consumers as well as builders and retailers alike continually look to NALFA for informative advice on choosing the best “green,” NALFA-certified, laminate-flooring option.

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

“Consumers, builders and retailers alike should look for the NALFA Certification Seal displayed on laminate flooring products to ensure their choice is of the highest standards,” 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 manufacturers, importers of laminate flooring products and suppliers of goods and services to the laminate flooring industry. NALFA’s mission is to encourage the establishment and maintenance of high standards in laminate flooring in North America and recognize those who maintain these standards.

For more information, visit www.nalfa.com.

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