

Carpet Off-Gassing

Occasionally we hear from someone asking about “new carpet odor.” This is called off-gassing. A few companies are selling products or services to eliminate this odor. This can be a big issue for someone who is very sensitive to odors. But for the great majority of people it is nothing but an unpleasant odor. These companies are trying to make a mountain out of a molehill and make money because of it. For most people carpet off-gassing is a minor issue or non-problem.

- New carpet does give off some VOCS. It usually takes 1 to 2 days for this to finish after the carpet has been unrolled and is at room temperature. In worst case may take 4 or 5 days.
- The odor comes from a compound abbreviated as 4PC (You don't want to know the long official name.) Most folks don't like the odor but it is not harmful. A decade ago, someone seeking some publicity said it killed mice and rats. The “news” ran in a lot of tabloid newspapers for a few weeks. Research showed it was the hot air being blown across carpet and into the mice cages that was the real culprit.
- Retailer or installer should unroll the carpet in a warehouse or your garage or other suitable place for it to acclimate and off-gas before bringing it into the home. However, it is common for installers working for lower prices to cut a corner here and not unroll the carpet until it is in your home. In that case get some windows open and a couple of fans moving the air. If you are very sensitive, stay away for a day or two.
- The adhesives used for glue down carpet will off-gas much more than the carpet itself. Off-Gassing also comes from paint, new furniture, vinyl flooring and other products that may be associated with a remodel and come into the home at the same time as new carpet. Carpet often gets the blame, but about 98% of the VOCS usually come from some other source.
- If a cleaner does get a call to fix the problem of off-gassing carpet, ventilation is often the best choice. Turning up the heat to 90 F+ can speed it up if the situation allows getting the room(s) that hot. Also cleaning with very hot water (No prespray, no rinse agent, just hot water) will also speed up the off-gassing and put an end to the problem sooner.
- Hydrocide can also be very helpful. Any of the premium odor control products (Spice Air etc.) can help cover the odor. But a person who is very sensitive to odors and bother by the carpet odor may also be bothered by the fragrance of the deodorizer.