

## LIFE CYCLE OF EVENT CARPET

Carpet can make events like trade shows and conferences comfortable, look beautiful, and feel inviting. But the reality is that carpet manufacturing and use requires a huge amount of environmental resources and cost. Some carpet choices are better than others, and some flooring and decor alternatives exist. Let's break down where your event carpet comes from, what its environmental life cycle might be, and lay out some choices.



High carbon impact



Chemicals or hazardous materials



High water impact



High waste impact

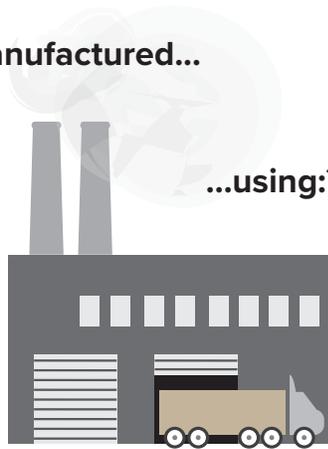
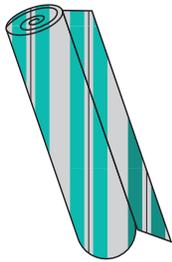


High energy impact



Most sustainable option

### 1 Carpet is manufactured...



...using:<sup>1</sup>

#### Petroleum-Based Virgin Materials:

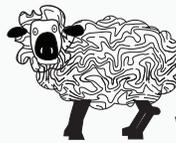
*Nylon, Polypropylene (also known as olefin), Polyester*  
Extracting these raw materials is harmful, and non-replenishable.



#### Natural Fibers:

*Wool, cotton, jute, sisal (agave), and seagrass*

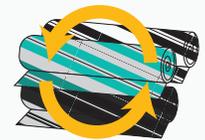
While wool can use excess water for dyeing, these materials are replenishable, biodegradable and harvested without environmental harm.



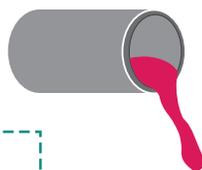
1 All manufacturing involves energy and water, emits carbon emissions, and risks exposure to chemicals. Some of these factors can be reduced with environmentally conscious measures, such as sourcing renewable power, recycling water, and sourcing local raw materials, reducing freight costs.<sup>1</sup>

#### Recycled Materials

*Carpet, Plastics, PET*  
Using non-virgin materials cuts down on the resource impact.<sup>9</sup>

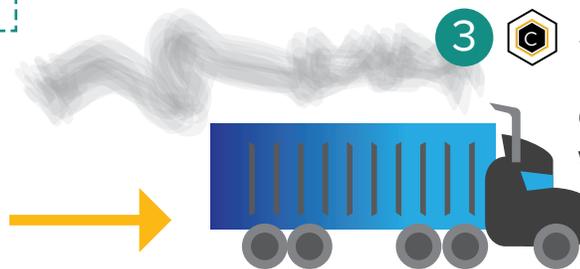


### 2 Carpet is dyed...



2 Dye processes range in their resource use and impact, though most are water-intensive. Natural dyes, while more eco-friendly, are less color-fast and may reduce the longevity of the carpet overall.<sup>2</sup>

### 3 ...shipped to a regional distribution warehouse.



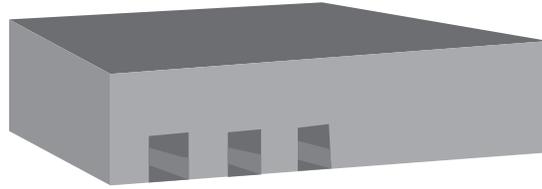
3 Fun fact: more than 85% of the U.S. carpet and rug market is produced by mills located within a 65-mile radius of Dalton, Georgia.<sup>3</sup>

# LIFE CYCLE OF EVENT CARPET, CONT.

## Classic Carpet

*Standard 10'x10'x cuts*

Made with recycled content, reused several times.



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Orders arrive for cuts, quantities, colors, and weights of event carpet.<sup>4 5 6</sup>

## Custom Cuts

Almost impossible to reuse due to custom dimensions; frequently ordered with premium weights and colors.



## Premium Carpet

Hard to reuse and not made of recycled materials. Lighter, brighter colors stain and soil more easily, and plush texture doesn't last.



## Aisle Carpet and Padding

Typically made of partial recycled content, major GSCs reuse aisle carpet 3-4 times before disposing of it. *Padding may be made of up to 100% recycled materials, and can be infinitiely reused.*



## Visqueen Covering

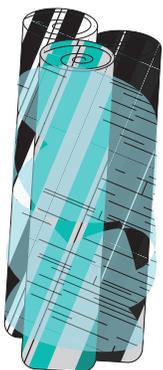
Plastic films that ostensibly protect carpet during installation are one-time use. While technically recyclable, the practicality of doing so varies from venue to venue.



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Carpet rolls may or may not be plastic-wrapped for shipping, depending on vendor and contractor.



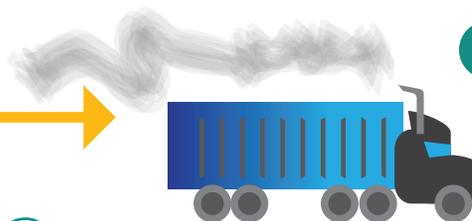
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...and shipped to event location.

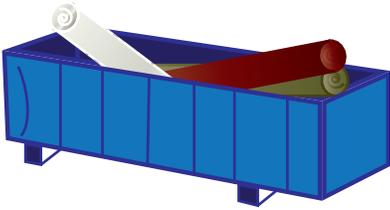


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Transportation of goods and people (especially internationally) is indisputably the highest GHG impact for any event.<sup>7</sup>



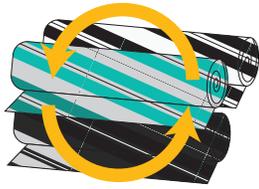
# LIFE CYCLE OF EVENT CARPET, CONT.

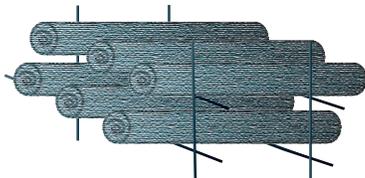
**Landfill**  
 Contractors or exhibit houses without recycle or reuse programs will most likely toss carpet in the landfill.

*Custom Cuts and Dyes*  
 Non-standard colors and shapes are more difficult to recycle than standard ones and will probably end up in landfill. Scraps from custom cuts may not be worth the freight costs to return for recycling.

*Abandoned Materials*  
 Left-behind flooring costs the general service contractor money for labor; to reduce cost burden, unaccounted-for flooring post-event is frequently landfilled, no matter its origin or condition. Cost for disposal is passed to the event planner.



**Recycling**  
 Carpet is recyclable, but the effort is expensive and not available everywhere. Sometimes this material is used again as fiber, but more often is combined with virgin materials to create a brick for use in injection molding plastics.<sup>8</sup>



**Reuse**  
 Classic carpets, aisle carpets and padding are reused multiple times by major general service contractors

**On-site / Local disposal**  
 Carpet is allocated to a local landfill from the venue. The event may be responsible for costs associate with open-top dumpster hauling and removal, so the more waste avoided, the better.



**Donated**  
 Events with material donation programs may be able to accept certain types of flooring for community partners.



**Carpet Collected at Show**  
 Often rolled and stored in durable metal racks, foregoing need for plastic wrap.



**Shipped to Recycler**  
 This could be the distribution center or a local or municipal facility, depending. *All recycling processes are manufacturing, therefore use energy and chemicals. It is nonetheless a preferred option over landfill.*<sup>10</sup>



**Returned to Distribution Center**  
 Smaller outfits may wash carpet in-house, while larger GSCs tend to send their carpet to the warehouse for cleaning and storage.



**Cleaned**

**With Water**  
 More traditional method



**Without Water**  
 Using a foam process

## INDUSTRY BEST PRACTICES

**Rent, Don't Buy**

Many GSCs are set up with carpet cleaning and recycling programs.

**Use classic colors and cuts**

Increase chances your carpet will be reused by sticking to classic options.

**Plan for disposal options**

If you're using an EAC rather than GSC, talk to them about carpet disposal and reuse during planning.

**THE NO-CARPET OPTION**

Consider areas of your event where it makes sense to eliminate carpet altogether. Aesthetically it's possible to maintain an industrial-chic look while forgoing the cost and impact of carpet in high-traffic areas like aisles, food courts, and keynote halls.

*It is a best practice to never double-carpet. If the area is already covered in textile, enjoy it as is!*

**Look for local donation centers**

Flooring may be accepted by local community groups (including animal shelters for soiled carpet).



**HONEYCOMB  
STRATEGIES**

Honeycomb Strategies specializes in custom sustainable solutions for the event industry through tailored program development, accurate data management, and genuine stakeholder engagement for measurable impact.

HCSUSTAINABILITY.COM

HELLO@HCSUSTAINABILITY.COM



## SOURCES

<sup>1</sup> **EasiPay Carpets** <https://www.easipaycarpets.co.uk/blog/carpets-environmental-impact/>

<sup>2</sup> **HW Flooring** <https://www.hwflooring.net/blog/articles/how-carpets-get-their-color-a-blend-of-art-and-science>

<sup>3</sup> **The Carpet and Rug Institute** <https://carpet-rug.org/>

<sup>4</sup> **Freeman**, "Sustainability: Freeman's Approach 2024" and professional conversations and experience

<sup>5</sup> **GES**, professional conversations and experience

<sup>6</sup> **Emerald Carpet**, professional conversations and experience

<sup>7</sup> **EPA Smart Way** <https://www.epa.gov/smartway>

<sup>8</sup> **CARE** <https://carpetrecovery.org/>

<sup>9</sup> **EPA** <https://www.epa.gov/greenerproducts/identifying-greener-carpet>

<sup>10</sup> **The World Economic Forum** <https://www.weforum.org/stories/2023/09/carpet-nylon-recycle-circular-economy/>