



FLOOR PREP

By Ivan Beskorovany & Chuck Fulford

There is no book for “Dummies”, there is no exact science to it and there isn’t really a clear descriptive way of putting it down on paper for everyone to understand its meaning. In fact, most of my clients think that it’s some sort of Ponzi scheme cooked up by us flooring contractors to ensure that jobs come in profitable. Just so you know it’s not a Ponzi scheme so that the flooring contractors can bilk money off of our customers. We don’t sit around the water cooler joking about how some sucker just signed a change order for thousands upon thousands of dollars.

So now that I’ve got your ear let me fill you in on the straight dope. I’m referring to that most ambiguous term that we all love to hear so much on bid day from flooring contractors called “Major Floor Prep”. You could probably ask 10 different flooring contractors what Major Floor Prep is and you’ll probably get 10 different answers. A few years ago I was talking to a colleague about what he considered to be Major Floor Prep and as he so eloquently put it, “It’s what makes or breaks every job”. I know that’s not a clear definitive or descriptive way of putting it for that matter, but that is truly how most of us flooring estimators look at it when the project is all said done. Major Floor Prep is like your mother-in-law who just won’t go away, its like the Chicago Cubs if you’re a Cardinals fan, its like in grade school when the teacher wrote on the chalk board and made that awful screeching sound that you could feel in your spine. Pure and simple folks, whether or not you’re a flooring contractor, a general contractor or an owner, Major Floor Prep is not your friend, or is it?

I’ve been in this business long enough to have seen some phenomenal flooring installations. Installations that make some flooring mechanics look as though, they’re no different from some of the greatest artists the world has ever known. I also know that none of these installations wouldn’t have turned out the way they did if it weren’t for Major Floor Prep. I’ve also seen installations that could’ve been great, that could’ve blown people’s minds and awed even the architect himself if only the floor prep would’ve been done correctly. This day of age with most hard surface flooring products being made out of soft materials, floor preparation is the key component in how the finished product will look in the end.

So let me digress and let’s get down to brass tax. What is Major Floor Prep? Don’t go grabbing for you Webster’s pocket dictionary and don’t pull out your Blackberry and look it up on the internet, because its not there. Let me start by describing what Minor Floor Prep is and maybe that will help shed some light on the Major Floor Prep aspect of the flooring biz. Minor Floor Prep is just that, its pretty minor really, it doesn’t take an engineer with fourteen degrees and two hundred certifications to figure it out. Minor Floor Prep is some light scraping, sweeping and patching small holes and saw joints. Typically, at least with my organization, Minor Floor Prep is included in all of our proposals on bid day. Now for our nemesis or our friend, or our nemesis who is sometimes our friend, I’ll let you decide if they have it included. I have had many many go arounds with many clients over the years when they’ve received change orders for

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Major Floor Prep. Fortunately most of the time these arguments end amicably, but a few have ended unpleasant.

Major Floor Prep is not included in any of my organization's base bids and I'd venture to guess that my competitors in the marketplace approach Major Floor prep the same way that we do, a chargeable extra. Major Floor Prep is the patching of room sized areas, skim coating an entire area or patching and leveling huge dips or crowns in the concrete. Any kind of heavy scraping or machine grinding of the concrete would also fall into play. Sometimes, in extreme circumstances when the concrete has huge dips which exceed 1/8" in 10', hydraulic underlayment floor patch may have to be used.

We recently had to do some major floor prep on a rather large project in St. Louis. The concrete company responsible for the pour did something wrong and caused us to have some major dips in the concrete. Naturally, this could not have been foreseen by us since the project was bid before the floor was poured. We came up with some estimates and the General Contractor backcharged the concrete company. Here is how we calculated the floor prep:

PRODUCTS TO BE USED FOR SELFLEVELING



X-ROC LevelCem 300 & X-ROC LevelCem Primer

Approximate Coverage

55 ft². per bag at 1/8"

27.5 ft². per bag at 1/4"

20.55 ft². per bag at 3/8"

13.75 ft². per bag at 1/2"

AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED

10ft x 16ft area w/ dips up to 1/2" in floor determined with a 10' screed

Total SF = 160.00 → 160SF ÷ 13.75SF of Coverage = 11.65 Bags + 4Gallons Primer

20ft x 8ft area w/ dips up to 1/8" in floor determined with a 10' screed

Total SF = 160.00 → 160SF ÷ 55SF of Coverage = 2.90 Bags + 1Gallon Primer

46ft x 18ft area w/ dips up to 1/4" in floor determined with a 10' screed

Total SF = 828.00 → 828SF ÷ 27.50SF of Coverage = 30.10 Bags + 7Gallons Primer

15ft x 27ft area w/ dips up to 1/2" in floor determined with a 10' screed

Total SF = 405.00 → 405SF ÷ 13.75SF of Coverage = 29.50 Bags + 7Gallons Primer

38ft x 9ft area w/ dips up to 1/8" in floor determined with a 10' screed

Total SF = 342.00 → 342SF ÷ 55SF of Coverage = 6.25 Bags + 2Gallons Primer

LABOR

Self-Leveling = Approximately 1hr per bag +8hrs for related miscellaneous labor

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PRODUCTS TO BE USED FOR SKIMCOATING



X-ROC FastFinish
Approximate Coverage
1/32": 152 ft²

AREAS TO BE ADDRESSED

1895SF of Self-Leveled Floor to be covered w/ a 1/32" Skim-Coat
TOTAL SF = 1895.00 → 1895SF ÷ 152SF of Coverage = 13 bags

LABOR

Skim-Coating = Approximately 1hr per bag

MATERIAL & LABOR BREAKDOWN

Product	Quantity	Unit Cost	Ext. Cost
X-Roc LevelCem 300 Self-Leveler 50lb Bags	81	\$ 19.50	\$1,579.50
X-Roc LevelCem Primer Gallon Pails	21	\$ 38.50	\$ 808.50
X-Roc Fast Finish Skim Coat 10lb Bags	13	\$ 62.00	\$ 806.00
Delivery & Distribution	1	\$ 125.00	\$ 125.00
Self-Leveling Labor (hrs)	89	\$ 61.00	\$5,429.00
Skim-Coating Labor (hrs)	13	\$ 61.00	\$ 793.00
		Materials	\$3,319.00
		Tax	\$ 201.63
		Labor	\$6,222.00
		TOTAL	\$9,742.63

When it was all said and done, the finished product looked great. The contractor was happy, the building owner was happy, and the concrete company was...well...not so happy. All is well that ends well, I suppose. I hope this helps give some insight into how major floor prep can balloon up rather quickly when the floors aren't built to specification. If you ever need help or have questions, feel free to call me @ 618-670-5567.