

A wide-angle, high-angle photograph of a large, crowded trade show floor. The floor is covered in blue carpeting. Numerous booths are set up, featuring various displays, signage, and people. In the background, signs for "EXIT TO CENTRAL CONCOURSE" and "EMERGENCY EX" are visible. The ceiling is high with many lights. The overall atmosphere is busy and professional.

# The Pinnacle of Sustainability in Trade Show Carpet

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Emphasizing Reuse over Recycling  
A whitepaper by Emerald Carpets





# Flooring in Trade Shows: A Story of Reuse and Sustainable Practices

Flooring, especially carpet, is integral to the vast domain of trade shows, notably recognized for its aesthetics, acoustics, and safety attributes. While the discussion around sustainability frequently fixates on recycling, the emphasis on reuse within the trade show industry presents a commendable and distinct perspective. This white paper offers a comprehensive dive into carpet, accentuating the significance of reuse and sustainability, and functions as a definitive guide for industry professionals.





# 1. The Carpet Landscape in Trade Shows

Emerald Carpets, a key partner in the tradeshow industry, has consistently showcased its commitment to quality and sustainability by providing significant volumes of carpet to most events. Our research indicates that traditional tradeshow floors are split into two categories. Aisle carpet makes up, on average, 50% of the floor space. The aisle carpet space includes registration, show management, and other common areas. Booth carpets make up 50% of the space, and these are inline booths or exhibit spaces. The trend is moving toward more experiential spaces and/or corporate events, changing the traditional 50/50 aisle and booth carpet split.





## 2. The Lifecycle of Carpet





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### 2.1 Reuse and Lifespan

Contrary to popular belief, carpets have a substantial lifecycle in the tradeshow industry. On average, a tradeshow aisle carpet sees four to five uses. In some smaller regional shows, it may see as many as ten plus uses, suggesting a good return on investment and underlining the importance of quality. Inline booth carpets (10', 20', and 30' booths offered in show kits) can see 15 uses or more. Booth carpets purchased by exhibitors may see multiple uses, but this is at the exhibitor's discretion.

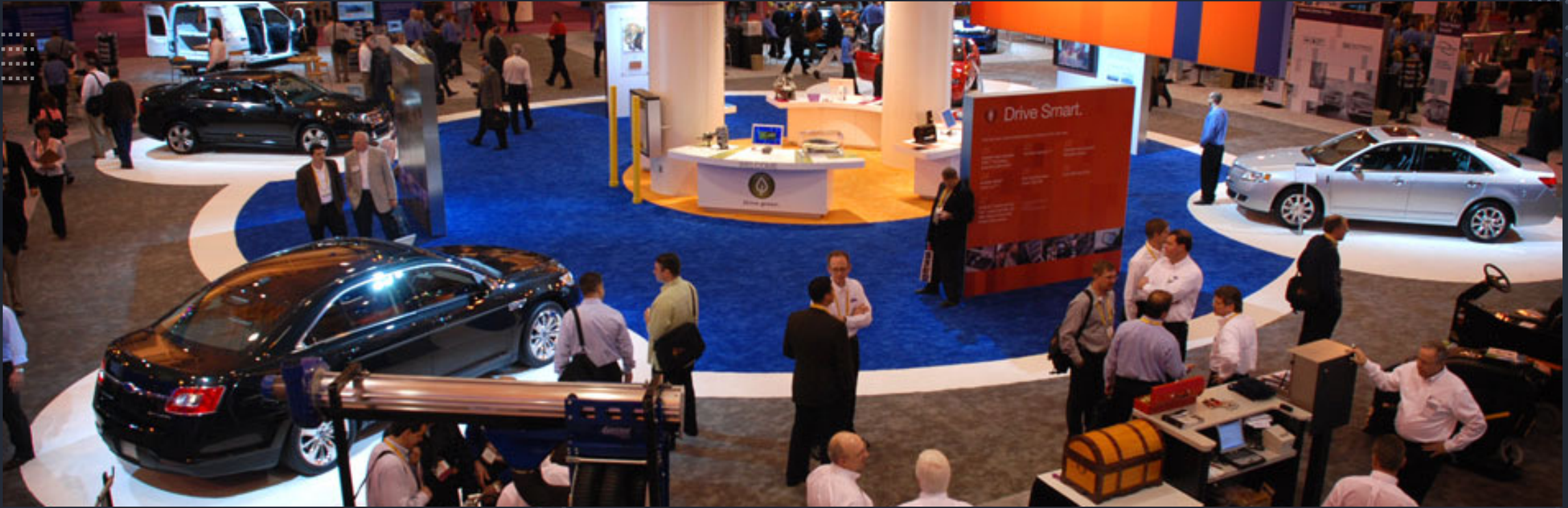




## 2.2 Sustainability and Environmental Footprint

The tradeshow industry has always employed sustainable practices regarding carpets but needs to communicate our sustainable practices effectively. For over 50 years, these key aspects include:





# Origins

Carpet is purchased and then reused multiple times by general service contractors. This has been common practice since the 1970s. Initially, the reuse of carpets was for economic reasons. The carpet is considered an asset, and additional uses can generate revenue. Compared with the landfill costs, this revenue has been common practice from the origin of tradeshow carpets. Carpet reuse has always been the most sustainable practice for tradeshows compared with any one-use flooring product.

# Disposal Processes

After multiple reuses of carpet and at the end of its tradeshow lifecycle, the carpet should be repurposed when possible. If repurposing is not an option, then recycling is the better option when compared to sending carpet to the landfill. It should be noted that recycling does require additional energy consumption and should be a last resort compared with reuse or repurposing of carpet.





# Factors Influencing Carpet Sustainability:

The first and most significant factor is requesting used carpet instead of mandating new carpet for an event.

Show site waste due to the floorplan layout. Laying out a floor plan to avoid angled cuts or column cuts, where possible, will allow more carpet to be reclaimed for future events.

Consider areas of the show that can use 9' wide carpet in 10' aisles. This practice can raise the number of uses on a carpet roll to an additional use or more.

Have the carpet prepared for installation before receiving it at the show site. This includes cutting, tagging, sorting, and racking to ensure minimum waste during move-in.

Custom-made shipping racks to transport carpets save energy and time at show site and protect the carpet during transportation. 10' long shipping racks protect carpet even more than 9' or 7'6" shipping racks. Shipping racks also reduce lift truck emissions compared to loading and unloading carpet one roll at a time.

Returning the carpet from an event promptly will allow the carpet to be cleaned and sent to the next event. If insufficient reused carpet is available, new carpet may need to be inserted unnecessarily.



### 3. Comparing Models: Global Perspectives

While the U.S. has its unique carpeting model, a comparative analysis with the European model offers valuable insights. There are alternative flooring products produced in Europe for the European model. These products, like U.S. carpets, are manufactured without water consumption and can be recycled. The drawback to using these products in the U.S. is that they require energy and emissions to transport overseas. Most importantly, these products tend to be one-use products. Compared with products that can be used multiple times, these one-use products make them less desirable as a sustainability option.







## 4. Future Gazing: Predictions for the Flooring Industry

Innovation remains at the heart of tradeshow flooring. Emerald is investing in new technologies to enhance the life cycle of their carpets and full circle recyclability of their products. As new technologies in the recyclability of carpet products emerge, it is most important to remember that reuse will remain the most sustainable practice. Any new product must, at the very least, be reusable as many times as the current tradeshow carpets.

Pioneering the path towards sustainable solutions, Emerald along with their partners continue to offer services that reduce transportation and material handling. These services not only reduce fuel consumption but also reduce emissions and waste at show site.





## 5. Beyond Carpet: Exploring Alternatives

While carpet remains the most sustainable flooring choice, it's essential to understand and consider alternatives. Some emerging trends include sheet vinyl for the look of a hardwood floor and the ease of installation at show site. Printed carpets and printed vinyl are both popular options for marketing and design of show floors and booth spaces. All these custom products can be reused just as traditional tradeshow carpets are, however, custom flooring products have fewer options for repurposing and recycling at the end of their intended use.



# 6. The Multifaceted Benefits of Carpet







## Conclusion

The trade show industry's prioritization of reuse offers a laudable approach to sustainability in an era where recycling is often misconstrued as the only path. This white paper highlights the delicate balance between business considerations and sustainable practices, underlining carpeting's pivotal role in trade shows.





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