



## Face Dimpling of Hardwood



The phone rings and it is an installer on the job," I am seeing raised areas where my staples shoot into the flooring where there is a lot of light coming in." I inform them, that the material is not defective and inform the installer he needs to get a new nailer that costs around \$550.00 to complete the job successfully or to buy a pail of urethane adhesive for over \$150.00 when he bid the job figuring to use the staples he already had. This is not a pretty phone call for me. No one wins. The installer is frustrated and the home owner is very upset. These bumps or otherwise raised areas known as face dimpling, will not go away.

The National Wood Flooring Association (NWFA) states that nail dimpling is a common issue when installing solid hardwood, and that using cleats can minimize these dimples. The NWFA also states that the floor mechanic (installer), type of fasteners used, and installation tools, play a large role in minimizing wood displacement. Now, not any cleat will do. If the installer chooses to use a 16 gauge cleat, he will have the same face dimpling issues. With all the new exotic flooring on the market like Brazilian Teak, Brazilian Walnut, and Strand Woven Bamboo, the typical 3/4" Solid Oak Nail Gun is only going to cause you heart ache and problems. Today's hardwood professional flooring installer needs to add a new tool to his arsenal, the 18 gauge Cleat Nailer.

What happens? While traditional 16 gauge cleat-type nailers and 15-1/2 gauge 1/2-inch crown staples have their place with softer hardwoods like oak, using them is usually the number 1 cause of face dimpling with these dense exotic floors. The 1/2-inch crown staple guns are not recommended because the drive-bar action that drives the staple is too much impact and breaks the tongues as it seats the staple.

The issue is as the fastener is driven into the hardwood, the hardwood cannot absorb the thickness of the fastener. The thickness of the fastener is then forced upwards resulting in the raised or dimpled area. Always inspect for dimpling from a low angle and with back lighting because it is very difficult to see when standing directly over the area. The size of the dimpling found just above the fastener is directly related to the fastener gauge. Using a thinner fastener, such as an 18 gauge cleat helps this situation.

Nail gun manufacturers have developed specialized nailing machines to accommodate thinner-gauge fasteners, thereby minimizing or reducing dimpling. JJ Haines has brought on the Pownail 50P, which is an 18 gauge nailer. This has worked well for when installing dense exotic hardwoods.



Re-sanding and finishing the floor may remove most of the dimples but it is a tough sell to the homeowner who purchased a pre-finished hardwood. Unfortunately, replacing the floor may be necessary to resolve the situation.