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Collins & Aikman Floorcoverings' Path to Sustainability
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ABSTRACT

Collins & Aikman Floorcoverings is recognized as an environmental leader in the carpet industry. The company takes a holistic approach to sustainability that collectively harnesses social equity, environmental accountability and economic performance. Core programs are dedicated to continual improvement in the areas of resource utilization, air emissions, water and energy utilization and waste reduction. The company's environmental metrics document significant progress in these areas. Teams focused on resource conservation, recycling and sustainable product research are evaluating new polymer systems, alternate energy sources and the latest technology to further reduce the company's environmental "foot print."

The company produces environmentally sound products designed to enhance the quality of life of its customers, employees and community. Environmental stewardship is demonstrated throughout the product's life cycle - from installation to recycling. Products provide environmental benefits, have an extended life cycle and meet high performance standards. All floor coverings have a 15 to 20 year useful life and are offered with the RS adhesive system. The product's RS adhesive system is preapplied and precured to minimize its impact on the indoor environment and simplify installation.

Collins & Aikman Floorcoverings, Inc., has developed patented technology to "closed-loop recycle" carpet back into itself (US Patent No. 5,728,741, 5,855,981 and patents pending). The process involves extruding and calendaring reclaimed carpet to produce new backing for ER3™ (Environmentally Redesigned, Restructured, Re-used) floor coverings. ER3 backing is made from 100 % recycled material composed of post consumer carpet returned by customers and recycled manufacturing waste. All vinyl-backed carpet, regardless of the manufacturer, can be recycled in the program - keeping it from being landfilled or incinerated.

ER3 recycled content floor coverings have had tremendous market success with over 120

installations to date. ER3 modular tile has recently become the company's standard carpet tile so that virgin tile will no longer be produced. Last year over eight million pounds of material were diverted from the landfill and recycled. With the company's move to standardize ER3 tile, this figure is expected to double in 1999. Patagonia First Assents: