

In-depth: Truly clean facility floors

Best practices from surface to subfloor



Facility managers have always been concerned about “clean.” Customers and employees can tell when a space has been carefully cleaned. A less-than-clean facility can easily translate into lost revenue. Today, following extended lockdowns related to SARS CoV-2, the stakes are even higher. And more than ever, a truly clean, shiny floor is the best way to show patrons that a facility is clean literally from the ground up. These insights will help facility managers achieve a deeper, longer-lasting, clean from the surface to the subfloor.

What’s behind a clean-looking floor

Most traditional floors, whether vinyl, tile, ceramic, porcelain or others, are top finished either at the factory or after installation. The finishing material, such as acrylic, is typically chosen for its durability and clarity; generally, multiple coats are required to build up a durable shine. A common challenge here is that dirt can work its way in between the floor coating layers – creating a worn, faded look that can greatly lower the quality of experience inside the facility.

To avoid this, floors with standard coatings can require more frequent burnishing and scrubbing. Once the floor gets a dull and dingy appearance, it’s time for a full strip-and-recoat process.

Similarly, some flooring substrates, such as no-wax laminates, inherently contain textures in the surface that can trap dirt and hold it regardless of regular cleaning protocols.

Most managers know that it’s less costly to maintain a floor than to repair or replace it. Keeping soil, moisture and other contaminants from working their way into the floor substrate can keep floors looking clean, reduce maintenance, and lengthen the life of the flooring material. For floors to be truly clean, it’s vital to choose the right cleaning solutions for the right floors.

Insights behind truly clean floors

Clean floors can be accomplished by first protecting the floor, and then by enhancing the floor. To help maintain cleanliness, it is always best to limit the time that dirt and liquids remain on the surface of the flooring.

1. Floor matting

Floor matting is a great solution for high-traffic areas such as doorways, elevator bays or in areas where many people may be moving quickly and in different directions. Commercial-grade matting is available in tread and even tape formats for secure and precise application. Some feature abrasive surfaces that help prevent slips and falls. In fact, you can find anti-slip floor mats certified by the National Floor Safety Institute (NFSI).

2. Floor protectant

Floor protectant is excellent for exposed floors, especially resilient flooring such as vinyl. Liquid floor protectants can be applied by mop in just one or two coats, either on top of or instead of an acrylic finish. Additional coats can increase shine. Clear protectants resist soil penetration, keeping dirt on top of the floor instead of working its way under the layers. Effective protectors will also resist abrasions and help retain the gloss of resilient flooring material. They can also be applied occasionally as needed to keep floors looking bright without stripping.



A good floor protectant will also resist the effects of common hand sanitizers. Many facilities now have more stations where hand sanitizers are dispensed, and dispensers often are not designed to prevent the product from falling to the floor. Even for short periods of time, many hand sanitizing liquids can stain or wear away floor finishes. Having a reliable floor protectant in those areas can help prevent staining or wear to valuable flooring materials.

3. Floor enhancers

Floor enhancers work with floor protectants when incorporated into routine daily floor maintenance. The best ones will keep the surface clean, but also maintain and even improve the gloss as well as fill fine scratches. Enhancers keep floors looking clean longer, and help floor protectors stay effective to reduce the need for burnishing, top scrubbing and stripping that can disrupt operations. Ideally, floor enhancers can be applied by machine using light abrasive pads.

Floor enhancers are also available specifically for stone floors – marble, terrazzo and other porous stone materials. They provide resistance to scuffs, black marks, stains and scratches.

For concrete, there's a solution that doesn't rely on coatings at all. Uncoated concrete floors can be cleaned, polished and densified daily using a special enhancement material specifically for concrete, such as 3M™ Concrete Floor Cleaner and Densifier.

Floor enhancers are typically used in conjunction with abrasives applied by low speed rotary and automatic scrubbers.





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