

Keys to a Successful Floor Care Program



For years, floor machine buffing was done at 175 Revolutions Per Minute (rpm). Later, machine speed was increased to 350 - 500 rpm. Now machines are available that burnish the finish at 1000 - 3000 rpm. Non-polythermic flexible finishes could not withstand the heat and abrasion generated by these machines and pads. They fractured, shattered, and powdered off the floor. The new polythermic flexible film finishes that were developed could be burnished to exceptional high gloss levels. The "wet look" had arrived. New equipment and products led to changes in maintenance procedures.

MAINTENANCE REQUIREMENTS

Floor care goes in cycles of daily maintenance, periodic scheduled maintenance, light and/or deep scrubbing and, lastly, stripping and refinishing the floor.

Daily Maintenance requirements are the same whether you want a high gloss wet-looking finish or a no-glare low gloss. Under daily maintenance you 1) dust mop, 2) damp mop and/or spot mop, and 3) inspect and clean your mats as needed. Keep in mind that for every pound of dust, dirt, and/or grit you allow into your facility, it costs you \$500 to correct the damage!

Periodic Scheduled Maintenance is designed to increase gloss. It requires more labor and therefore expense than daily maintenance. Under periodic scheduled maintenance you 1) spray buff and/or burnish, and 2) restore or apply a floor finish. Always clean the floor before you spray buff, burnish, restore or apply a floor finish. This must be done in order to decrease the amount of dirt ground into the finish and extend the time between stripping operations. When you want a high gloss wet-looking finish, follow the periodic scheduled maintenance as listed. When you want a no-glare low gloss look to your finish, do not follow the periodic scheduled maintenance program. Don't spray buff, burnish or use a restorer on a no-glare low gloss finish. These operations are designed to increase gloss. The key to labor and cost control is to do the required periodic maintenance and then cycle back into daily maintenance.

Light and/or Deep Scrubbing is necessary for either a high gloss or no-glare low gloss appearance. The best approach is to perform daily maintenance for as long as possible before you cycle into periodic scheduled maintenance (for the high gloss or wet look). Then, perform the periodic scheduled maintenance and cycle back to daily maintenance. Eventually, a time will come when the floor appearance is not satisfactory. Periodic scheduled maintenance can no longer bring back the gloss level you want or else the daily cleaning and wear has decreased the level of no-glare low gloss finish protection. At this point, you need to add additional coats of finish by performing either a light or deep scrub. Light scrub when the finish is lightly soiled and deep scrub when the dirt has penetrated deeply into several layers of finish. For light scrubbing, use a neutral, low foaming cleaner with a red pad and apply one to two coats of finish. For deep scrubbing, use the same dilution level of neutral, low foaming cleaner with a green or blue pad and apply two to three coats of finish.

Afterwards, cycle back into daily maintenance and either general cleaning for the no-glare low gloss look or periodic scheduled maintenance for the high-gloss wet look.

Stripping Cycle is the costliest cycle. If the other three cycles are properly performed, you can avoid stripping for a long time. Some facilities still have floor tiles that contain asbestos. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has recommended guidelines for stripping vinyl asbestos containing floors. First, avoid stripping floors for as long as possible. Second, properly train the staff who strip the floors. Third, follow appropriate work practices such as those recommended by floor tile and finish manufacturers. Fourth, strip the floors while they are wet. Do not perform dry stripping operations. Fifth, when stripping the finish, run the machine at low speed; 175 - 190 rpm. Sixth, select the least abrasive pad possible. Do not use a black pad if a blue or green pad will accomplish the task. Seventh, do not overstrip the floor. Overstripping can damage the floor and cause the release of asbestos fibers.

For many years it has been common practice to buff the floor tile after stripping. If there is any possibility that the floor tile contains asbestos, do not buff the bare tile. Apply a coat of seal and/or finish and buff the seal and/or finish, but do not do this on the unprotected tile. You want to encapsulate the asbestos tile in a coat of seal and/or finish. If the tile is worn and porous, apply several coats of seal or finish before buffing and/or burnishing.

DO'S AND DON'TS

Advances in chemicals and equipment for resilient floors have made it possible for companies to maintain attractive floors in their buildings using minimal time and effort. However, the technical improvements have not made the floor maintenance process "foolproof."

It takes proper training, skilled operators, thorough planning, and care in application of cleaning and finishing products to bring out the beauty of a floor and maintain the maximum level of durability that companies seek.

It is important to select high quality equipment and cleaning supplies from manufacturers who offer strong support to help you reach your cleaning objectives. There are some simple "Do's and Don'ts" to follow that will help your cleaning staff produce a level of floor cleanliness and gloss that will impress visitors, customers and employees.

DO take the time to make sure workers understand proper use of equipment and supplies. Take advantage of In-Service training programs in proper handling and application of products offered by distributors and manufacturer's representatives. The time and effort spent on this advanced training will save valuable time on a variety of cleaning tasks and will lead to improved end results.

DO be alert when cleaning and use common sense and good judgment. Take time to read the label directions and follow them closely. Improvising on or ignoring directions has caused many cleaning nightmares. The directions for most products were put together by manufacturers after considerable testing to find the best procedures to follow which will provide maximum cleaning benefit to the customer.

DO verify that you have the proper equipment and supplies before you begin. Check your inventory to verify that you have everything on hand to do an effective cleaning job. You will avoid risky shortcuts that can lead to unsatisfactory results.

DO use clean equipment, solutions and materials at all times. Don't attempt to economize by using dirty or worn out equipment. They will lose their effectiveness. Be sure the equipment and materials are as spotless as you want your floors to be. Clean equipment and supplies yield clean floors and vice versa.

DO use proper dilution by following the manufacturer's directions. There is a tendency to think that adding more chemical than the manufacturer recommends will make the product perform better or faster. This is not necessarily true. Adding extra chemical in mixing may create cleaning problems by reducing the effectiveness of the equipment and leaving residue on floors.

Abiding by the following list of "Don'ts" helps keep your resilient floors in like-new condition;

DON'T use cold, clean water alone to clean a floor. Water is one of the worst cleaners for a floor. It does not have the ability to suspend dirt, so you wind up diluting the soil, spreading it out and leaving it on the floor. Always use recommended dilution of cleaner with cool water.

DON'T use poor quality products.

DON'T use a cotton mop when applying floor finish.

DON'T use a metal bucket for a floor finish or a restoration product unless the bucket is stainless steel. Products can become contaminated by the metal and pick up a gray discoloration. Whenever possible, use a plastic bucket, but whether the bucket is plastic or metal, place a trash can liner inside to protect your product from residual contamination.

DON'T stop an automatic scrubber when brushes are running or resting on the floor. Moving brushes continue to swirl in one spot and can cause white circles on the floor. Raise the brushes, squeegee the remaining liquid by moving the machine forward, and then shut off the machine.

DON'T leave the pad attached to an automatic scrubber or buffer when a job is completed. Remove the pad, rinse it out. This will extend the life of the pad and reduce discoloration and dirt pick-up caused by a dirty pad.

It takes the right combination of equipment, product and pads, matched with the specific cleaning needs and used with careful application procedures to have those clean, beautiful floors so admired and desired by everyone.

Management Support

You must have the support of upper management and your customers to have a successful floor care program. If you don't, your efforts are doomed to frustration.

Always use clean equipment, clean solutions and clean materials. Clean equipment, clean solutions and proper procedures always equal a clean floor. If you have dirty equipment, materials and custodial areas, you will end up with a less desirable appearance.

Proper Dilution. Always follow the manufacturer's recommended directions on the label. If it says two ounces of concentrate per gallon of water, use two ounces per gallon. If a little does a good job, then a lot more does not necessarily do a better job. Read and follow dilution instructions carefully.

Necessary Equipment and Supplies. Always check your inventory before starting a job. You need the right combination of equipment, product and pads. Have your distributor or manufacturer's representative help you match product to equipment and choose the proper pad to accomplish the task. Be sure you have the appropriate equipment and supplies so you can avoid short-cuts.

Proper training and In-Services. Work with your manufacturer's representative and/or distributor. Ask him or her to do an In-Service with your personnel so all employees are instructed and trained in proper procedures and use of the products.

Always use good judgment. Good judgment and common sense will resolve many problems that occur during floor operation. By following label directions and using good judgment and common sense, you can avoid lost time, trouble and expense.

After choosing your maintenance system, finish, solids, covering the safety issues of slip and fall support, matching the buffing/burnishing equipment and pad to the final finish selected, and applying the keys to a successful floor care program, you're on your way to a very happy customer, increased sales, and increased credibility on floor care issues!

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