

Cold Weather Cleaning

Entrapment Averts Tracking of Winter Debris

By Patrice Dumas

During winter months, snow and ice can infiltrate buildings and put every occupant and floor surface at risk. Salt, sand and moisture form a triumvirate of hazards and nuisances for cleaning staff and anyone walking where they collect. Substances carried indoors on footwear can deface and damage flooring, and, in the case of snow and ice, lead to puddles and slippery surfaces inside a facility, potentially causing slip-and-fall accidents.

Property and facility managers should prepare for the stormy season with:

- High-performance matting systems
- Wet/dry vacs
- Portable extraction machines to clean matting
- Plenty of dry microfibre mops
- Safety signage

Rock salt's price point makes it a mainstay for most facilities' snow and ice removal plans despite the harm it can cause to concrete, interior floor surfaces, vegetation and wildlife. Sand provides slip-and-fall protection and has fewer negative environmental effects, but it is unwanted indoors

where it can soil and/or erode floor finishes and be tracked throughout the building.

Almost all snow- and ice-melting products can permeate floor finishes, creating unsightly residue or discoloration. A neutralizing conditioner can help reduce the risk of damage and remove residue. Following the conditioner, apply an all-purpose cleaner to further maintain the surface and protect its finish.

Regular vacuuming, mopping, and buffing can minimize any problems associated with sand, including scratched surfaces. Autoscrubbers, which can deep-scrub floor surfaces and remove embedded soils and contaminants often missed by a mop, could also augment the daily floor care regimen in the winter months.

COSTS

Nevertheless, floor care chemicals and equipment tend to be expensive, while labour costs to meet winter cleaning demands, especially in high-traffic facilities, add significantly more to the operating budget.

The International Sanitary Supply Association (ISSA), estimates that up to 24 pounds of dirt can be tracked into a facility by 1,000 people during a 20-day work period. Approximately 70 to 80% of the dust, grime and dirt in public buildings is tracked in from the outside, and dirt and sand accumulate disproportionately during snowy, icy, and wintry conditions.

ISSA calculates the cost to remove just one pound of dirt after it is tracked through a building can exceed \$500. High-performance matting helps cut those expenses by capturing outdoor soils and contaminants.

RULE OF 15

A five-foot length of scraper mats outside the facility is the first contact point for removing debris from the bottom of footwear. Next, facility managers should provide at least five feet of wiper/scraper matting just inside the entrance to further remove soils and moisture on shoe bottoms. Finally, the wiper mat is the last line of defence.



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It, too, should present another five feet of matting to absorb remaining soils and moisture before pedestrians step onto to the hard surface of the floor. In total, this three-part matting system comprises what industry experts call the "rule of 15" – a network that the average person will step on four to six times with each foot.

A product must have a warranty for a minimum one-year lifespan to be classified as high-performance, but some high-performance mats have warranties that extend for several years. Regardless, they will need to be properly maintained and vacuumed daily.

Ongoing moisture control is especially important in winter. Saturated matting is largely ineffective so property managers and maintenance staff should pay attention to entranceways and high-traffic areas. Replacement mats should be in stock to provide replacements quickly when necessary. **PMR**

Patrice Dumas is Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Mat Tech, a Canadian-based matting manufacturer located in Granby, Quebec. For more information, see the web site at www.mattech.ca.



By Stephen Hanig

Many of today's commercial carpets are made of synthetic fibres that help hide dirt and soils. However, with traffic, this soil can grind into carpet fibres, robbing the carpet of its original lustre, colour and texture.

The Carpet and Rug Institute recommends more frequent vacuuming in winter months. Upright vacuums with rotating brushes are best for loosening soils and removing them from carpet fibres.

Other carpet care suggestions for winter include:

- Vacuum carpets making multiple passes in different directions. This helps remove deeply embedded soils.
- Attend to spots and stains quickly. The longer a spill or stain stays on a carpet, the more difficult it can be to remove. Blot stained areas to remove excess soil and moisture. Then use a professional carpet spotting kit to remove stains.
- Don't postpone cleaning. There is a tendency to delay carpet extraction during the winter months based on the assumption that carpets may soon be soiled again and that the process is not cost-effective. However, just the opposite is true. Keeping carpets clean helps prevent re-soiling and can significantly increase the lifespan of the carpets.
- Turn up the heat in the cleaning process. Because of their added flexibility, portable carpet extractors are often preferred in larger facilities. However, some machines do not heat the water/cleaning solution. Heat improves the effectiveness of cleaning chemicals, often necessitating fewer chemicals and making these machines more environmentally preferable. Select portables that heat the water/cleaning solution to 100° C (212° F) for best results.

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