

GENERAL MAINTENANCE INFORMATION

Following the recommended maintenance program is the key to a long, attractive life for commercial resilient flooring. Walk-off mats, sweeping, mopping, polishing and buffing protect more than just the floor - they protect the building owner's investment as well.

How to Determine Your Maintenance Program

Before a maintenance program can be established, there are a number of factors which must be considered in order to determine the most appropriate, cost-effective methods to use. It is critical that the maintenance methods for each floor and area be chosen only after careful evaluation and regard to the following:

■ **What resources, equipment, chemicals and personnel are available to the maintenance provider?**

Are well trained maintenance personnel available?

Are the appropriate equipment and chemicals available?

■ **What are the end user's expectations?**

What is considered an acceptable appearance?

What is the desired floor finish (high or low luster)?

■ **What is the location of the flooring within the building?**

Entryways, lobbies and pivot point areas may require more protection and more frequent cleaning than lower traffic areas in other parts or upper levels of the building.

■ **What is the volume and type of traffic and the type and amount of soil likely to be found at the location?**

For instance, traffic types and volumes in entryways and corridors will vary greatly from those found at nurse's stations or in examination rooms. Dirt and grit carried in from outside can differ significantly from the soils and chemical spills found in a laboratory or emergency room.

■ **Are there special traffic or footwear situations?**

Areas subjected to frequent rolling loads provide a different environment than a children's play area or corridor in an elementary school.

■ **What is the color(s) of the flooring?**

Color and pattern can have a huge impact on a floor's appearance and when properly chosen, may help mask soiling and staining. Midtones are better choices than light or dark colors. Busier/high contrast patterns will hide better than solid/monolithic ones.

Grit Control

Controlling grit and soil is crucial to prolonging the attractive appearance of any floor. Grit or soil is any material - including dirt, stones, sand and clay - that is deposited onto the floor by normal commercial traffic. The best way to control grit is by using appropriate walk-off mats.

Recommended mats have a high-friction, open surface designed to knock grit particles from the bottoms of shoes and then trap the particles. Mats should be used at every entrance, inside and outside, should be at least as wide as the doorway and 8' to 12' long. Also, be sure to select a mat with a backing that won't stain the floor.

Don't forget that the mats need to be cleaned regularly. They should be vacuumed, shaken and/or hosed off frequently.

Fine dust particles will still find their way into the interior, despite existence of the recommended walk-off mats. Regular vacuuming, sweeping and dust-mopping will help control this type of grit. For the most cost-effective method of controlling fine dust-like grit, dust with a treated non-oily mop.

Cleaning The Floor

Cleaning a floor can range from a simple damp-mopping to a complete stripping. Damp-mopping/spot-mopping is appropriate for cleaning up dust, spills and other easy-to-remove soil. The detergent solution should be changed frequently to eliminate redepositing of dirt on the floor. Done regularly, this procedure can minimize the need for more time-consuming maintenance procedures.

When faced with heavily embedded soil, scrubbing is the recommended solution. This method requires application of a nonstripping cleaning solution, such as properly diluted **Armstrong S-485 Commercial Floor Cleaner**, followed by scrubbing and rinsing (if necessary) of the floor. The scrubbing procedure can be performed with pads, scrub brushes, a single-disc floor machine, a wet-vac—helpful for removing dirty cleaning solutions and rinse water—or an automatic floor machine (using 3M red, blue or green pads or equal). **When working with linoleum, all maintenance solutions must be 10 pH or less.**

The automatic floor machine is a favorable choice for especially large areas because it applies the detergent solution, scrubs the floor and takes up the dirty solution in a single operation. Automatic floor machines are available in various sizes and can be fitted with the appropriate pad or brush. The single-disc machine, on the other hand, requires separate equipment for each of the scrubbing/rinsing steps.

Polishing The Floor

There are three reasons for polishing a floor:

1. Protection
2. Appearance
3. Ease of maintenance

Note: If a sealer is recommended or required, it must be applied before the polish. (See Sealing The Floor section.)

Note: Do not apply more than four coats of sealer and/or polish at one time. Wait a minimum of 24 hours before applying more polish.

The best polish for protecting and enhancing many commercial resilient floors is a high-quality commercial floor polish with a percent of solids level usually between 16% and 22%, such as **Armstrong S-480 Commercial Floor Polish**. Designed for durability and resistance to detergent solutions (except stripping solutions), S-480 offers a broad-spectrum response to a variety of maintenance procedures and equipment. **When working with linoleum, all maintenance solutions must be 10 pH or less. Static Dissipative Tile requires the use of Armstrong S-392 Polish.**

On most floors a minimum protective layer (three to five coats) of polish is required at all times. Maintaining an acceptable gloss level is done by buffing, spray-buffing or burnishing. Allow adequate drying time after each coat. Do not buff, spray buff or burnish a floor with less than three to five coats of polish. Without the mandatory three to five coats of polish, the pad or brush may make contact with the actual flooring surface, most likely marring the flooring material with burn marks and swirls.

Supplementary coats of polish should be applied as appearance and gloss level dictate. To maintain optimal appearance in high-traffic and high soil areas (such as lobbies, chairslide areas in cafeterias, elevators, supermarket checkout lanes, etc.), polish may need to be applied more frequently to maintain the minimum protective layer.

Sealing The Floor

Generally, sealing a floor is optional. Sealers are usually used on older floors to improve maintenance characteristics and on floors where additional stain resistance is desired. However, if the polish manufacturer recommends the use of a sealer, that recommendation should be followed. Sealers must be applied before the polish.

Generally two coats of a sealer is sufficient to provide the desired protection. Sealers by themselves are generally not recommended as a walking surface. They must be top coated with a floor polish. Resilient flooring sealers are generally applied by the same techniques used when applying floor polishes.

Armstrong S-495 Commercial Floor Sealer is designed to provide a proper base for **S-480 Commercial Polish**, as well as offer the added benefit of increased stain resistance. **When working with linoleum, all maintenance solutions must be 10 pH or less.**

Stripping The Floor

Stripping is the process of removing all dirt and old polish from the floor. Use a strong, highly alkaline detergent solution, such as properly diluted **Armstrong S-490 Commercial Floor Stripper**. Stripping should be done at 300 rpm or less with a 3M blue or green pad or equivalent or a scrub brush. The use of more aggressive pads or brushes can cause permanent damage to the floor. Remove the dirty solution with a wet-vac or mop, and rinse the floor thoroughly. This

process should be repeated until all old polish is removed. **Do not** perform dry stripping of any resilient floor. **Do not use Armstrong S-490 Commercial Floor Stripper on linoleum. When working with linoleum, all maintenance solutions must be 10 pH or less.**

There are also mop-on/mop-off stripping solutions which do not require machine scrubbing. The use of mop-on/mop-off, no-scrub and/or no-rinse strippers is not recommended on tile floors that are less than two years old, because they may affect the adhesive bond. The use of these highly solvenated or highly concentrated strippers can also be detrimental to linoleum and other specialty flooring products. Always refer to flooring manufacturer's recommendations.

Stripping is the most labor intensive and, therefore, the most expensive floor maintenance procedure. It should not be done more often than is absolutely necessary. A well-trained maintenance staff using quality equipment and maintenance products on a regular schedule can significantly reduce the need for stripping..