

The Commercial FLOORING REPORT



WINTERS EFFECTS ON FLOORING MATERIALS

Certainly not every section of the country suffers from the harsh effects of winter weather and related conditions on flooring materials but enough of you do business in those regions that you should know what the flooring will be subjected to. Other than the obvious track in of snow and water how much thought do you really give to how the flooring will be affected to protect your clients investment? First and foremost it is important to understand the traffic into the building and onto what type of flooring the first steps will fall. With the increased use of hard surface floors of all kinds two things must be considered; the safety of the patrons of the space and maintaining the integrity of the flooring material and its installation.

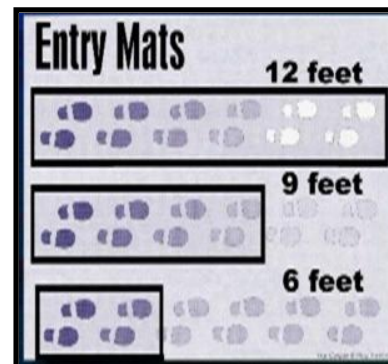
So the first thing to consider is an adequate and effective entry mat system that will catch particulate matter, snow and moisture. This system should be one that can be maintained and serviced regularly. Whether that system is walk off mats that can be changed out or a more permanent type



system that lends itself to being serviced. There are a multitude of protective entry area systems that are the first line of defense against outdoor elements being tracked indoors. What to use depends on the type of facility and flooring being protected and the "level of quality" of the space. A headquarters of a corporation that has marble floors in the lobbies would more likely be a candidate for an "in place"

system at the main entries. The use of walk off mats would not make a good first impression. On the other hand walk off mats at the entry to a grocery store that are changed weekly by a rental company or daily when they

get wet would be the best application for this type system. Whatever is used has to fit the need for protection of the flooring in the facility and be safe enough to remove the detrimental elements without harming patrons entering the space.



Speaking of the detrimental elements, what are they and how do they cause harm? The obvious weather related infiltrators are snow and water from melting snow or rain. The foreign infiltrators, those materials put in place by humans, are salt and ice melt pellets. Salt is an effective material for melting ice and snow but using it will damage concrete. Ice melt pellets, calcium chloride, are far more effective at melting ice and snow especially at lower temperatures and this material will not damage concrete. That would seem the product to use as it eliminates ice and snow and won't damage outside surfaces such as concrete walkways. It will however wreak havoc on interior flooring and leave a very dangerous residue on hard surface floors. Calcium chloride pellets, when dissolved, leave a residue that feels like 3 in 1 oil – very slick and slippery. Not something you want on a hard surface

floor. This chemical can also be tracked far into a building, not just at entry areas, but into elevators and up into the high regions of a building. It is carried on pedestrians' feet to its final resting place anywhere in the building. It may not damage concrete but it will do a number on carpet.

Because this stuff is hydroscopic, which essentially means it pulls moisture from the air, at its final resting place it will create a harbor for attracting soil. Dark spots will form from the attraction

of soil and unless this chemical is flushed from the carpet it will continue to create



heavy soiling conditions. If it exists in sufficient volume it can actually weaken the laminate strength of carpet resulting in buckles and wrinkles. Not that this will occur overnight or with one contamination but left ignored it will cause damage. Realize too that calcium chloride is highly alkaline and it could cause damage to certain colors. This material can also yellow vinyl flooring materials permanently. All this being said it is important to keep calcium chloride out of the interior of buildings. Just to give you an example of how hydroscopic calcium chloride is it is used in canisters in closets in tropical areas to prevent moisture from affecting clothing. It is spread on dirt in construction sites to keep dust down and it is the component used in the calcium chloride test to determine the moisture vapor emission rate of concrete. A very effective chemical to be sure but not something you want sitting as a residue on flooring material.

TEMPERATURE - HUMIDITY

Cold air in the winter will cause flooring material to contract so if you see cracks where there weren't any before, seams shrinking in carpet or stiff rugs it's because they are reacting to the cold air. Couple the cold with



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The COMMERCIAL FLOORING REPORT



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low humidity and you can cause wood to shrink or check and if the humidity is low enough and the carpet is not effectively treated with a static protection you may feel the jolt of up to 50,000 volts of electricity passing through you when you touch a metal surface. Not only will static build up in carpet but it can also create static discharge in office furniture when occupants slide in and out of a chair. This was a problem we worked on in a communications center many years ago that affected the occupants and the equipment they were using.

COLOR ISSUES

Something else you'll want to consider with flooring used in geographic regions subject to inclement winter weather and the detrimental conditions and elements it is subjected to is the color. If the colors used are not conducive to hiding the effects of winter soiling maintaining the flooring will be a constant battle. Everyone wants to keep their space looking clean; no one wants to be a slave to it. Consider the costs of maintaining the flooring and colors being used. Light colors may create great aesthetics initially but they can lead to very high maintenance costs and even premature replacement of the material. That's not being green or fiscally responsible.

THINK INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

When using flooring material in areas affected by

harsh winters don't just think of the inside but be conscious of the effects the outside will have on the flooring you're specifying, recommending and suggesting. Flooring products will always do what you ask of them provided your requests do not exceed the products capabilities. There is a correct product for every application you just have to know what works where and why.

ICRI CERTIFICATION TESTING AT THE WORLD OF CONCRETE

As a follow up to last months article entitled "Concrete Testing – Doing it Right" we received several inquiries asking about getting certified. There will be a certification program conducted by the International Concrete Repair Institute on Thursday, February 4, 2010 held at the World of Concrete at the Las Vegas Convention Center. The program will consist of ICRI Slab Moisture Testing Technician Training Seminar, a written exam and performance examination. If you're interested in being certified to conduct concrete testing this is the first place to do that in 2010. For more information contact ICRI Certification Department at 847-827-0830. The World of Concrete Show runs at the same time Surfaces does in Las Vegas.

MARK YOUR CALENDARS AND PLAN TO ATTEND

Speaking of Surfaces, Lew Migliore, of LGM and Associates and author of The Commercial Flooring Report will be conducting two seminars at Surfaces.



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The first is "Flooring Installation – What You Don't Know Will Hurt You" on Wednesday, February 3, 2010 from 8:00 am to 9:30 am and Lew will also be a panel member on "Common Causes and Corrections for Installation Failures" on the same day from 12:00 to 1:00 pm.; plan on attending.

Lew will also be participating in the Carpet Inspectors Symposium in Las Vegas on Monday, February 1, 2010. Also in June of 2010 Lew will be conducting a seminar at Neocon in Chicago and at the National Facility and Management Technology Expo in Baltimore on Wednesday, March 17, 2010.

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