

Cleaning Trends

Winter Floorcare Starts at the Door

Winter can be tough on floors. Weather conditions amplify floor care problems and make the need for a floor care maintenance program all the more important.

Below are a few tips from David Stanislaw, an engineer and floor care expert at Tornado Industries, to help keep your winter floors looking their best:

Control grit. "A floor maintenance program should start with grit control," says Stanislaw. "This reduces labor time and helps prevent slips and falls." He also suggests using outside mats to trap particulate soil on shoes, but says more absorbent interior matting is needed to remove moisture and additional soils.

Increase cleaning frequencies. Snow and rain in winter months often mean that more moisture is brought into a facility. Stanislaw advises increasing mopping or autoscrubbing frequencies to remove soil and prevent accidents. "Also, make sure floors are adequately cleaned before burnishing, especially during the winter months, or grit and dirt will be ground into the finish, causing it to yellow," he says.

Understand ice melters. Because many areas of the country use chemical ice melters this time of year, cleaning professionals need to be aware of the impact these have on floors and safety. Sodium chloride, a very common ice melter, is abrasive by nature and can harm interior floors if it is not trapped on mats or removed by cleaning. Calcium chloride, an alternative to sodium chloride, absorbs moisture but turns it into a greasy film in warm buildings. "Autoscrubbing can be very effective in both situations, removing grit and greasy residue and preventing slips, falls, or damaged floors," Stanislaw says.

Prevent finish-adhesion loss. A final winter floor care problem concerns finish adhesion. A floor finish on marginally porous floors, such as quarry tile, may produce a tough, high-gloss finish in warm months but suffer finish-adhesion loss in the cold and gritty conditions of winter. "Again, the best ways to prevent this are with mats that stop grit before it enters the facility, with more frequent cleanings, and with autoscrubbing," says Stanislaw. "It may also be necessary to recoat in the winter." He advises recoating be performed when the floor temperature is 50°F (10°C) or warmer, saying, "If it is colder, cracks may develop in the finish, and more adhesion problems will result."

Winter floor care does take more time and attention. Increasing floor maintenance programs and mechanizing floor work as much as possible will help reduce the time needed to maintain floors, decrease labor costs, and keep floors looking their very best. "Floors can shine year-round," says Stanislaw. "A proper maintenance program and good equipment are all you need."