

INTRODUCTION

The following guide should be reviewed prior to commencement of any cleaning and maintenance on carpet tiles.

This guide has been prepared by Signature Floorcoverings technical division to assist you in maintaining and extending the life of your carpet tiles over many years to come.

It includes information on maintenance, the importance of planning, recommended maintenance frequency, reduction of soiling, removal of dry soil, vacuum cleaner recommendations, cleaning, spot and spill removal and general information.

You can protect your investment and extend the life of your carpet with regular maintenance and care.

For further information, please do not hesitate to contact your local area sales consultant or visit Signature Floorcoverings® on the web at www.signaturefloors.com.au.

APPEARANCE MAINTENANCE

There are key factors that will affect the appearance of Signature Floorcoverings® carpet tile products after installation such as:

- Flattening and matting of the carpet fibre.
- Soiling, change in colour and general appearance of the carpet tiles.

Maintaining the overall appearance of the Signature Floorcoverings® carpet tile products requires that:

- Products are selected for the correct application and use.
 - Regular maintenance is carried out to prevent soiling, which can cause carpet fibres to mat and bind together.
- The following recommendations are to be followed to ensure that the overall appearance of the installation is maintained:

- This product must be fully adhered to the subfloor (direct stick method)

By re-arranging furniture periodically, the traffic pattern is changed and allows the carpet tiles to wear more evenly.

- Regular rotation of carpet tiles in heavy traffic areas is required to prolong the life of the carpet tiles. This is subject to the level of foot traffic.
- Technically, carpet tile pigments have never been better but colours can fade if exposed to harsh sunlight. If possible, carpet tiles should be protected from intense sunlight with blinds, curtains and/or window tints.

It is recommended that approximately 2% of the carpet tiles ordered should be allocated as spares for maintenance purposes.

MAINTENANCE INSTRUCTIONS

Signature Floorcoverings® carpet tile products are quality engineered to provide a long useful life and enhance the working environment.

Carpet tile offers many advantages over other flooring systems, such as sound absorption, reduced fatigue and lower maintenance costs. From the start, the maintenance program should be considered as part of the buying decision. If proper maintenance is neglected, the carpet's appearance and performance will suffer, shortening the carpet's useful life and raising long-term costs.

A comprehensive carpet care program* consists of the following four (4) elements:

- Reduction of soil entering the building
- Removal of dry soil
- Removal of spots and spills
- Cleaning by water extraction

THE IMPORTANCE OF PLANNING

Carpet tile maintenance must be established as a scheduled program, rather than being a random series of reactions to soiling conditions and infrequent cleaning. Virtually every complaint of poor appearance, rapid soiling, pile crushing and many times poor performance has been shown to be related to a lack of planning and control for the maintenance program.

The most important consideration when planning a maintenance program is the budget.

Like other expensive furnishings or equipment, advanced static-controlled carpet tiles represent a substantial investment for any facility and deserve adequate care to prolong its effective life. If the carpet tile maintenance budget is set unrealistically low, the carpet tile will need to be replaced prematurely.

Other items to consider are the amount of traffic and type of soiling, which will vary by area.

Due to the higher traffic level, entrance lobbies, and hallways will need more care than offices. Production line areas and outside entrances will require more effort due to the more difficult soiling conditions.

RECOMMENDED MAINTENANCE FREQUENCY

- Light Traffic: Private offices & cubicles, computer rooms and test areas.
- Medium Traffic: Shared offices, interior hallways, conference rooms and light assembly
- Heavy Traffic: Entrances, elevators, main hallways, break rooms, work/copy rooms, mailrooms, light assembly and manufacturing, command centres, data centres and call centres.
- Severe Conditions: Entries to main lobbies, areas surrounding surface mount, wave solder or aqueous cleaners.

REDUCTION OF SOILING CARPET

The use of walk-off mats at transition areas from the outside or hard surface to carpet tiles is important. Walk-off mats can greatly reduce the amount of soil entering a facility by normal traffic. There are two (2) types of mats which should be used:

1. Soil Removal Mats: Good soil removal mats have a coarse texture and are able to brush soil from shoes and hold large amounts in the pile.

2. Water Absorbent Mats: The water absorbent mat must be used inside, either full-time or at least during wet weather.

When both types of mats are used in combination, they should always be placed so that incoming traffic passes over the soil removal mat first, because the absorbent types have very little soil holding ability. For mats to continue to trap soil, they should be cleaned on a regular basis.

REMOVAL OF DRY SOIL

Vacuuming is the most significant element in the maintenance of carpet tiles and in the overall appearance of the facility. Research has shown that 85% of the soil tracked into a building is dry, and the other 15% is oily. Vacuums are designed to control this dry soil.

Frequent vacuuming removes particulate soil from the surface before it works down into the pile where it is more difficult to remove. Walking on the carpet accelerates the rate at which the particles settle deep into the pile.

Areas with heavy traffic, such as entrances and major corridors, restaurants and assembly or manufacturing, should be vacuumed at least once a day. Areas with less traffic, such as offices, computer rooms, engineering labs, should be vacuumed every other day depending upon conditions.

VACUUM CLEANER RECOMMENDATIONS

Please see below for the recommended vacuum cleaner types:

1. Vacuums should have dual motors - one to drive the source of agitation or vibration which loosens the soil, and one to drive the vacuum fan which creates the suction that picks up the particles. This prevents the vacuum from losing efficiency as the beater bar/brush becomes slowed by excessive debris or as the bag fills. Dual motor vacuums also survive the demands of a commercial location and last longer than single motor vacuums.
2. Bags that fill from the top are preferred over those that fill from the bottom. As the bag fills, it does not add to the load on the vacuum motor. Bags should be checked frequently and replaced when $\frac{1}{2}$ to $\frac{2}{3}$ full. When changing bags, also check the belt and replace if loose or worn. Between cleanings, regular use of a pile lifter can remove deeply imbedded dry sand and soil, help stand up the pile and renew the appearance of the carpet in high traffic areas. A pile lifter is an upright two motor vacuum with a large, adjustable, gentle bristle brush with a motor, a high suction vacuum motor, and a sand trap. Using a pile lifter in traffic lanes just prior to cleaning will remove the deeply embedded soil and open up the pile so the water extraction can be more effective.

Another good use of a pile lifter is for post-construction clean-up as follows:

1. Vacuum the area to pick-up the larger sized chunks of dried mud, dirt, and construction debris.
2. Use a pile lifter to remove the fine particulates, such as dry wall dust, which are deep in the pile.
3. After using a pile lifter, the final step is cleaning by water extraction to remove the residual soil, this will be made less difficult now that the area has been vacuumed and a pile lifter utilised.

CLEANING

Even with thorough vacuuming, cleaning is necessary to remove the 15% of soil which is the oily type material. In order to maintain a good appearance, carpet tiles must be cleaned on a periodic basis to prevent it becoming so dirty that it can no longer be cleaned satisfactorily.

The frequency of cleaning must be adjusted to the rate at which soil accumulates; therefore, heavy traffic areas typically require more frequent cleaning, as do areas with less traffic but more soil.

When the colours of the carpet tiles begin to look dull, it is time to clean them. The traffic lanes will show this first. If the carpet tiles are cleaned before it becomes excessively soiled, the cleaning will be more successful and a much easier task. This is especially important in places oily soil is prevalent, such as the areas near streets or asphalt parking lots, and those around certain messy electronic manufacturing operations, SMT line and cleaners. Solder and production soil forms a sticky material similar to varnish which traps and holds dry soil and may become nearly impossible to remove as it ages.

NOTE: Damp carpet tiles clean shoes and collect soil faster. The resulting black discoloration in the traffic lanes will require pre-treatment with a traffic lane cleaner to break down the soiling. It also requires the use of hot, not warm, water to effectively clean the carpet tiles.

THE CLEANING SYSTEM

When choosing a proper cleaning system, it is necessary to consider how effectively it cleans and how well it enhances the appearance retention of the carpet tile texture without leaving a heavy residue.

Signature Floorcoverings® recommends the Duplex® water extraction system, which research indicates provides the best capability for cleaning. This system is commonly referred to as “steam cleaning” although no steam is actually generated. The process consists of spraying a solution of water into the pile and using rotating brush suction, recovering the used water and soil into a holding tank.

It is important to deliver clean cold water to the carpet tile face. Self-contained, walk-behind machines are another type of hot water extraction equipment commonly used. They apply the cleaning solution at a rate which is balanced with the recovery capability of the machine, resulting in a carpet that is only damp after cleaning.

This feature prevents untrained users from over-wetting the carpet to the point that drying time is unacceptable. This type of machine is employed largely by hospitals and schools with in-house maintenance staff.

Signature Floorcoverings® does not recommend the use of this equipment because as the recycled solution is re-used, the materials dissolved in it are distributed over the entire area.

Signature Floorcoverings® recommends the use of a company which is a member of a professional association.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IN-HOUSE MAINTENANCE

If you decide that cleaning by in-house personnel is best, here are some guidelines to follow:

1. Before beginning steam cleaning, thoroughly vacuum the area to be cleaned to remove as much dry soil as possible. Use a pile lifter (beater bar) if necessary in high traffic or heavy soiled areas.
2. Pre-treat the heavily soiled areas and traffic lane and wait the recommended time before cleaning. Although it is advisable to minimise the use of solvents, many traffic lane cleaners do contain some solvents to help remove the stubborn oily dirt often found in traffic areas. A small area should be treated and the liquid extracted before the traffic lane cleaner dries.
3. Use a detergent with a pH of less than 10, preferably near 9, and with a minimum of non-sticky residue. The attraction between the detergent and the particles of soil and oil is critical to the cleaning process. However, the detergent residue continues to attract these particles even after drying.
4. Increasing the amount of detergent beyond the recommended level does not greatly increase cleaning performance, but makes the complete removal of detergent more difficult. Because build-up of detergent residue

is the most common cause of accelerated re-soiling complaints, DO NOT use extra. Signature Floorcoverings® does not recommend the use of cleaning agents with optical brighteners.

5. Avoid over-wetting the carpet tiles. This is controlled by a combination of proper equipment and operator training.

6. DO NOT use any silicone-based anti-soil treatments on carpet tiles. The only anti-soil products approved for use as needed are formulated with either Dupont's Teflon or 3M's Scotchgard.

7. Reduce drying time by using several fans or air movers to move air across the carpet tiles, in combination with a dehumidifier or air conditioner to pull moisture out of the air.

8. Carpet tiles should be dry within twelve (12) hours; even less is better.

SPOT AND SPILL REMOVAL

All maintenance procedures mentioned thus far have been planned; spot and stain removal is the reaction to an unplanned incident. Therefore, it is desirable to have the needed materials handy by planning ahead of time. Professional carpet cleaning companies have spot removal kits available in convenient carrying cases that contain all the necessary materials.

Remove as much of food spills as possible by scraping gently with a spoon or dull knife. Absorb wet spills as quickly as possible by blotting with white paper or cloth towels. Always blot, never scrub or rub abrasively, as a fuzzy area may result. When blotting, work from the outer edge in toward the centre of the spot to avoid spreading the spill and enlarging the problem. Always follow spot removal with a water rinse to remove the sticky residue from the spotter; the residue can cause rapid re-soiling. There are spotting extractors that work well for the rinse-and-extract method. Always draw out the remaining moisture with several layers of white towels weighted down on the spot.