

KEEP FLOORS INVITING AND CLEAN—NO MATTER THE TYPE

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So much goes into the ambiance and layout of a retail store. Lighting, wall décor, displays and fixtures, checkout areas—these are all important accoutrements that make it both practical to sell product and appealing to attract customers. The type of flooring a retailer chooses also plays a significant role in the form and function of a store. It needs to reflect the customers' preference for a place they want to shop and the image the retailer wants to project as a company.

There are many floor options for retailers. Polished concrete is a preferred flooring type in retail. Ceramic/porcelain tile is growing in popularity as is luxury vinyl tile (LVT)—the fastest growing floor covering segment in commercial markets.¹

The material and coating of your floors is an important factor in determining which products and equipment to use to produce the best cleaning result. If not done often enough—or if performed incorrectly—floors can discolor and show signs of premature wear that can invalidate the manufacturer's warranty. No matter what type of flooring your retail environment has, the following cleaning best practices and equipment recommendations can help keep your floors inviting and in optimal condition.

Ceramic/porcelain tile

 is growing in popularity as is luxury vinyl tile (LVT)—**THE FASTEST GROWING** floor covering segment in commercial markets.¹



1. Floor Covering Weekly, LVT Makes a Home in Commercial, June 2017

POLISHED CONCRETE

There's multiple reasons why polished concrete is increasingly used in retail environments. Polished concrete has been touted as a "maintenance-free" floor system, with a long lifespan and an attractive price point.

Most of the time, concrete is already part of the store's foundation. Polished concrete doesn't require burnishing, further reducing costs by removing a step from the cleaning process. Stained concrete can be coated or polished on a daily basis to give the floor a high reflective shine—and different color dyes can be used to make a distinct pattern into the concrete.

If properly maintained, polished concrete flooring can be a sound investment for your retail store—providing excellent traction and an easy cleaning routine with no need for waxing, stripping or buffing. However, that doesn't mean that polished concrete floors won't require regular care. These practices, if carried out in a timely manner, will help ensure that your concrete flooring stays attractive and in good repair.

CONCRETE CLEANING TIPS

- 1** Always place mats at entrances to catch as much dirt as possible before it enters a facility.
- 2** Sweep sand and grit away immediately to avoid scratching the surface—paying special attention to entryways.
- 3** Mop up spills immediately, especially around frozen food or juice sections of stores because polished concrete is prone to staining.
- 4** Use a microfiber mop for daily dusting.
- 5** Polish concrete floors at least weekly, if not daily.
- 6** Use an automatic floor scrubber for polishing.
- 7** Use diamond impregnated blades or pads to get a high shine.
- 8** Ensure that staff, whether in-house or outsourced, understands which pads and brushes are appropriate for polished concrete.
- 9** Cleaning solutions that contain detergent can potentially stain the floor. To prevent stains, do not use an acidic chemical or allow the detergents to dry on the floor.

TILE

Other popular retail flooring options are VCT, porcelain or ceramic tile, and LVT. VCT flooring is very bright, has layers of floor finish and when burnished, reveals a “wet look” that is shiny and appealing. Some retailers have a mix of carpet and VCT to create different looks for various areas of the store. For example, a department store might put carpet down in areas where clothing is displayed and use VCT for areas showcasing toys and household goods.

LVT is seen as an upgrade from VCT and it's frequently used in higher-end retail stores. It has a look and feel reminiscent of a home environment since vinyl planks can have a wood or tile look. VCT also requires less maintenance and the tiles won't break or crack. Ceramic/porcelain tile is frequently used in heavy traffic areas and it can have a long life if cleaned regularly and correctly.

With porcelain or ceramic tile, the biggest challenge is keeping the grout lines clean. Grout cleaning used to be much more labor intensive—if it was cleaned at all, leaving tile floors looking dirty and grimy. But there's now a much more efficient and less taxing way to keep tile grout looking fresh and clean: an orbital scrubber that has different brushes and pads that reach into the grout lines that are below the tile surface. Orbital scrubbers and specialty pads can also be used very successfully on many of the new LVT planking that has micro divots, which can be difficult to clean with a standard disk scrubber.

In-house cleaning crews or contractors need to have a very regimented cleaning program that emphasizes structure. They should follow these best practices to help ensure tile flooring looks its best.

TILE CLEANING TIPS

- 1** Always place mats at entrances to catch dirt before it has an opportunity to travel to other areas of the facility.
- 2** Use a dust mop to pre-sweep up dirt and debris before scrubbing regularly with an auto scrubber.
- 3** Orbital scrubbers are extremely versatile. Use orbital scrubbers with a variety of specialty pads and brushes to clean into tile grout lines and micro divots.
- 4** If possible, use a detergent-free cleaning solution in the scrubber that reduces the risk of slip and fall incidents.
- 5** If chemicals must be used, don't overdo it. Measure chemicals to reduce waste and detergent residue left on the floor.
- 6** To keep VCT tile floor looking bright and shiny, burnish on a regular basis or use new types of pads that can achieve a shine without a secondary burnishing process.

PLAN FOR CLEANING SUCCESS

Changing the flooring in your retail space is a big undertaking which can take years to plan and budget. As some retailers expand existing stores, they have additional considerations when trying to make older flooring visually align with new flooring. If a retailer adds onto a space that has existing VCT, they can choose a complementary tile for the new area to achieve a consistent look.

Time-saving tip: Use one machine to clean various surfaces

SIMPLIFY CLEANING

Retailers are also grappling with cleaning labor shortages and turnover. To help retain janitorial employees, make the cleaning process as simple as possible. Versatile cleaning machines such as orbital scrubbers can clean multiple floor types simply by switching out different pads and brushes. Cleaning becomes easier for staff when they don't have to learn to operate different machines and retailers gain valuable space when they don't have to store a variety of cleaning machines. For smaller retail spaces or sudden spills, consider a microscrubber rather than a mop and bucket to make cleaning a less strenuous process—while ensuring a faster, drier and customer-friendly cleaning process.

CLEAN SUSTAINABLY

Additionally, think about your use of chemicals to clean. Green cleaning—or detergent-free cleaning—has many advantages for retail. Detergent-free cleaning has less impact on the environment compared to conventional cleaning chemicals. It's also safer because there are no chemical residues left on floors that can lead to slip-and-fall accidents. Green cleaning can even reduce the costs associated with conventional floor cleaning detergents, such as purchasing, inventory management and worker training.