

# Modular Carpet Tile Maintenance

Establishing a maintenance program can measurably reduce cleaning costs and greatly extend the useful life and attractive appearance of your modular tile. Regular maintenance also helps to maintain indoor air quality. Because many energy-efficient buildings now recirculate a lower percentage of outside air, whatever is brought into the building- including dust, dirt and allergens- remains unless it is mechanically removed. Most of it is heavier than air and falls to the tile, where it is trapped and easily removed by regular vacuuming and routine maintenance. Good air quality is sustained as well as clean carpet.

A good maintenance program keeps both tracked-in and airborne soil buildup to a minimum through prevention, daily cleaning and spot removal, and periodic deep cleaning. This guide outlines these key components on the following pages to help you develop an effective plan. For maximum results, the plan should be implemented as soon as the tiles are opened.

## How to prevent soiling

*Identify Key Traffic Areas.* Since 85% of soil is tracked in on dirty shoes, use a floor plan to anticipate where it will localize. First identify light-, medium- and heavy-traffic carpet areas, then match them to an appropriate maintenance schedule. You should expect the highest traffic in:

- Track-off areas where tile and hard surfaces meet, including outside entrances, restrooms, etc.
- Funnel areas where traffic is channeled or confined, such as doorways, elevators and vending machines.

*Choose Your Color Wisely.* Plan color, pattern and texture to accommodate traffic levels and local soil color. In general, light shades are best in small areas where there is less soil. Darker earth tones mask dirt and are excellent in high-traffic zones. Extremely dark shades, however, tend to reveal dust and lint and should be avoided near entrances or adjacent to hard floors. Middle-toned patterns, prints and heathers hides stains well, while textures of varying pile heights help camouflage uneven soiling for a more uniform look.

*Install Walk-off Mats.* Locate soil-absorbing barriers at all building entrances, lobbies and elevators. Mats should be cleaned frequently so they don't become sources of tracked-in soil themselves, especially in inclement weather.

*Carpet the Elevators.* Elevators take the brunt of foot traffic and soiling. Adding removable elevator carpets, fastened with Velcro or double-sided tape for easy cleaning, helps capture accumulated dirt before it reaches the tiled floors.

## Daily vacuuming is essential

More than any other factor, daily vacuuming of all high-traffic areas determines the life of the carpet. Even when soil is not visible, vacuuming high-traffic areas will reduce the amount of maintenance time for tile in more removed locations. You can retain the clean appearance of the entire tile installation by concentrating on this relatively small portion-usually less than 30%. Following the floor plan, a daily vacuuming schedule should be established by the time the installation is ready for use. As a general guideline, a thorough daily cleaning should include eight passes by the machine in all key areas. Be sure that the proper equipment is available to get the job done right. It is vital to select and use equipment that is appropriate to the environment, degree of foot traffic and volume.

## Equipment

A heavy-duty upright vacuum is the best choice for effective daily carpet tile care - including one for each floor in larger installations. It should be sturdy, easy to handle and provide good brush action for high air flow.

Results of laboratory testing show that vacuum cleaners with a rotating brush and beater action are the most effective in loosening and removing deeply embedded soil. The action of the brush disturbs and agitates the pile surface and brushes soil particles from the fibers. Then the strong suction of the vacuum pulls the particles from the tile. Wand-type machines provide only suction and minimum fiber agitation.

## Spot and stain removal

In addition to routine vacuuming, spot removal should be done daily as needed, by a well-trained attendant. Prompt treatment is critical. The longer a spot is allowed to set, the more difficult it is to remove. Some spots will become permanent stains if allowed to remain until dry.

Give immediate attention to trouble spots like tracked-in grease, food, beverages and chemical spills. In hospitals and institutional settings where frequent spills occur, immediate cleaning is especially important to avoid chemically set stains.

As a last resort, replace stained or damaged tile with new ones from attic stock or from less visible areas of the installation. A color difference could occur depending upon tiles condition or exposure.

## Supplies to keep on hand

For small areas, commercial spot removal kits are ideal. They include detergents, solvents and several types of special spotting agents for inks, dyes, blood and urine, plus basic equipment and directions. Most kits require no special skill and are effective on most stains. You also can make your own. For your convenience, this guide includes directions for preparing cleaning solutions. Cleaning procedures also are included for removing many specific stains. As a precaution, all cleaning materials should first be tested on an inconspicuous area to assure that they don't affect color. Put several drops of the agent on a white cloth, then blot the tile. Do not use the agent if the color transfers to the cloth. For large areas, a wet/dry vacuum also is useful to draw up the spill, the detergent and rinse water. This lessens spot spreading and quickens drying time.

## General Spot Removal

Remember! Spots need prompt attention. Attend to spot removal as soon as possible.

- A. Identify the substance causing the spot, if possible.
- B. Gently scrape up any solid material with a spoon or dull spatula.
- C. Blot up all liquid using a clean, all white cloth or paper towel.
- D. Apply a cleaning chemical or detergent spotter to another clean cloth and blot - do not rub - the stained area. Do not pour the liquid directly onto the tile. Avoid overwetting, which could damage the secondary backing.
- E. Begin at the edge of the spot and work toward the center, repeating the blotting action until no more of the spot is deposited onto the clean cloth.
- F. After the majority of the spot has been removed, put several thicknesses of paper towels or facial tissue on the area, add a light weight and allow to dry. This will wick up any remaining stains from the carpet tufts.

## Special help for special needs

Occasionally, some spots and spills require specialized care to prevent staining.

Industrial chemicals (floor and tile cleaners, bleach, etc.) often contain potentially harmful chemicals. Immediate action is vital. Vacuum solid material first, then remove the remainder with cold water. Heat only worsens the harmful effects.

When the stain's cause is unknown, first try to remove the stain with a cleaning solvent or an absorbent cleaner such as Host® or Capture®. If this isn't successful, use a detergent solution that dries to a powder, leaving no sticky residue. @Work does not recommend the use of a bonnet cleaning system, as it can damage the fibers in your carpet. Use will void any warranties.

## Periodic deep cleaning

All carpet tiles, no matter how resistant to dirt and stains, will eventually build up a layer of oily, sticky soil that is not removed by vacuuming. If this solid is allowed to remain, it will bond to the carpet fiber, causing matting and unsightly traffic lanes.

Periodic deep cleaning delays replacement and extends the life of the carpet. There are several methods for deep cleaning carpet tiles that you may select, each with advantages and disadvantages.

These include:

- Dry foam
- Dry extraction
- Hot water extraction

Effective interim maintenance methods are the dry foam method such as "Von Schrader," Chemdry, or the dry extraction method such as Host® or Capture®. They are all quick-drying and leave a minimum detergent residue. Some areas may require the deeper cleaning method of hot water extraction. Hot water extraction improves the appearance and usable life of the tile. It drives hot water and detergent down into the pile under pressure, flushing out heavy soil and micro-organisms. The results are comparable to in-plant cleaning.

Operator training is important with any deep cleaning system, but expertise is particularly critical for hot water extraction. When properly performed, hot water extraction will not damage the carpet because none of the detergent penetrates the primary backing and gets into the latex to cause delamination.

Choose the best system for your tile based on the degree of soiling and the available level of operator proficiency. Most franchisers and many owner/operator systems provide excellent training and support to users of their systems.

## Minor repairs

Occasionally, it may be necessary to make a few minor repairs to the carpet. Below are some suggestions for tile care.

*Depressions:* If furniture or heavy objects remain in one position too long, some depressions in the surface of the carpet may appear. To repair, shift furniture slightly, then brush the area with your fingertips to loosen pressed tufts. If the depression remains after several days, hold a steam iron several inches above the carpet. Do not let the iron touch the carpet or saturate it with water. Again, brush the tufts to blend with the surrounding area.

*Edge Sprouts:* @Work's uniquely styled tiles are the result of advanced tufting processes, precision shearing and the use of heavy face weights. Tiles of heavier face weights often have excess yarn bundles surface as the tiles are slid together during installation. Removal of excess yarn along the tile's edge is performed during the installation or shortly thereafter. If yarn tufts appear higher than they should, after the installation simply stand them up between your fingers and clip the excess yarn with scissors. This is normal with heavy weight tiles.

*Snags:* Snags most often occur in loop pile that's caught by shoe nails, rough vacuum attachments or other rough objects. Snags should be clipped like sprouts immediately. Never pull them.

*Burns:* Pile fiber which has been burned is melted and destroyed and cannot be restored. Have the tile replaced.

*Shedding:* Regular vacuuming will easily remove loose carpet fibers that often appear in new cut pile carpets. Be sure to install carpet tiles under temperature and humidity conditions average to the building.

*Fuzzing:* Most apparent in older loop pile tiles, fuzzing is caused by embedded grit and surface wear breaking down the fibers. Loose fibers, still bound at one end, stick up and can be carefully clipped off. To avoid fuzzing, keep the carpet clean. Consult your dealer or professional cleaner if fuzzing is extensive.

*Pilling:* After extensive wear, "pills" can appear on the pile surface. These small balls of entangled fibers and lint can be safely clipped off.

## Cleaning solutions

*Detergent:* Mix ¼ teaspoon of a dishwashing liquid that doesn't contain lanolin or bleach, with one quart of lukewarm water.

*Vinegar:* Mix 1/3 cup of white vinegar with 2/3 cup of water.

*Enzyme Detergent:* Mix one teaspoon of enzyme presoak, such as BIZ®, with one cup of warm water.

*Ammonia:* Mix one tablespoon of clear household ammonia (3% solution) with ½ cup of water.

*Solvent:* To protect the latex backing, use a dry solvent such as Picrin®, Energine®, Carbona®, or K2R® in small amounts only.

*Absorbent Cleaners:* Host®, Capture®, and Blue Luster Dry® also are excellent for removing large spots.

## Spot removal guide

- A Solvent, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot
- B Detergent, blot, ammonia, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot
- C Detergent, blot, vinegar, blot, ammonia, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot
- D Detergent, blot, vinegar, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot
- E Detergent, blot, ammonia, blot, vinegar, blot, water, blot
- F Use cold ingredients: water, blot, detergent, blot, ammonia, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot
- G Freeze with ice cubes, shatter with blunt object, vacuum, solvent, wait, blot, repeat if needed
- H Blot, water, blot, ammonia, blot, detergent, blot, water, blot

Beer	A	Ketchup	B
Blood	F	Mascara	A
Butter	A	Mayonnaise	B
Chewing Gum	G	Milk	B
Cheese	B	Nail Polish	A
Chocolate	B	Paint (Latex)	A
Cocktails	D	Rust	D
Coffee	D	Shoe Polish	A
Crayon	A	Soft Drinks	D
Egg	B	Soya Sauce	B
Excrement	B	Tar	A
Fruit	D	Tea	D
Furniture Polish	A	Toothpaste	B
Garden Soil	B	Type Ribbon	A
Glue (White)	B	Urine (Fresh)	H
Grease	A	Urine (Dry)	C
Hair Spray	A	Vomit	E
Ice Cream	B	Wax (Candle)	G
Ink (Point/Felt)	A	Wax (Paste)	A
Ink (Permanent)	E	Wine	D