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SAME LEVEL FALL PREVENTION – FLOOR MATTING

Floor matting has long been recognized as an effective strategy to capture contaminants from footwear and provide an improved coefficient of friction near liquid sources. This technical bulletin will review the various types of matting and provide guidance for maximizing their effectiveness.

Entrance Matting

Scraper Mats – Their surface is made of an abrasive material, designed to scrape or rake away heavier contaminants.

Wiper Mats - With an absorptive surface, these mats are designed to dry footwear by wiping away moisture.

Wiper/Scrapers – With a surface comprised of both absorptive and abrasive material, wiper/ scraper mats are designed to both rake away heavy contaminants and provide a drying effect.

Research by the Carpet and Rug Institute indicates that 80% of contaminants tracked into a building are captured by the first 15 feet of a carpeted surface. Using a combination of matting types is generally recommended to maximize this effect. For example, a 5 foot scraper mat may be placed outside the building entrance to capture heavier contaminants. Another 5 foot wiper/scraper mat within the building to continue capturing heavy contaminants but also begin drying. And finally, an additional 5 feet of wiper matting to more thoroughly dry the shoe sole. 15-20 feet is generally considered the ideal entrance matting length for dry conditions. That ideal is extended to 20-24 feet for wet conditions and 24-29 feet for snowy climates. Needs will also vary with the amount of foot traffic. The absence of moisture or contaminants on the flooring at the end of the entrance matting is a good indication that the appropriate length has been selected.

Multi-Purpose Matting

Multi-purpose matting is typically placed near Liquid sources to capture spills, elevate workers above spills, and provide a higher level of slip resistance than the installed flooring. Absorptive wiper mats are often effectively placed in front of sinks, drink dispensers, and in the produce departments of grocery stores. For liquids that create especially slippery conditions like cooking oils and greases, a webbed rubber mat can be used to drain the spill to the floor and elevate workers onto a highly slip resistant surface.

Selection

Select a mat that is designed for the intended use. For example, a rug should not be used as entrance matting. Rugs tend not to have a slip resistant backing and they are unlikely to absorb moisture as efficiently as a wiper mat. It is also good practice to select matting with a beveled edge to reduce the likelihood that it will become a trip hazard.

Cleaning

Once a mat has reached its saturation point, it is not only rendered ineffective, it becomes a source for contaminants to be tracked further into a building. A cleaning routine should be designed to prevent matting from ever reaching its saturation point. Flooring under matting should also be cleaned to ensure the slip resistant backings do not become compromised by debris or liquids.

Inspection

Matting should be routinely inspected for damage that will reduce effectiveness or present a trip hazard. Visible signs of surface wear and furled edges are indications a mat should be replaced.