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APPEARANCES DO MATTER

We've created our own maintenance monster, in a sense, because today's carpets are masters of disguise. The intricate patterns mask soiling and stains. The advanced fibers and backings are engineered to resist crushing and fluid absorption. New dyeing techniques ensure that carpet colors stay bright, vibrant and colorfast. Yarn treatments applied during manufacturing and even some after-market treatments, effectively repel stains. All this can create a false sense of security. That's because despite the latest manufacturing technology and can't-see-the-stain visuals, carpets still need regular maintenance to look their best. Well maintained carpets are a good reflection on everybody who touches them:



Specifiers look smart for selecting a carpet that looks good upon installation and down the road



Facility managers offer tangible proof that they are doing a good job of maintenance



Owners and occupants are proud of their building's appearance



Customers like to conduct business in a clean-looking environment

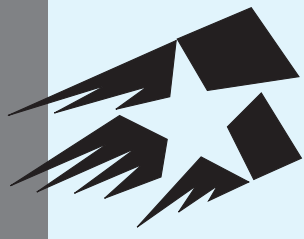


Manufacturing mills earn a reputation for well made and beautiful carpets



Quite simply, the longer a carpet lasts, the less it costs. The key to protecting that investment and extending the life cycle of carpet is frequent, proper maintenance.





THE NITTY GRITTY OF COMMERCIAL CARPET MAINTENANCE

You might be surprised to know that up to 24 pounds of dirt can be tracked in by 1,000 people coming through a building entrance over the course of 20 days. Without proper carpet maintenance, the dirt that gets tracked onto carpets creates a multitude of costly appearance and performance problems. It has been estimated that the cost to remove just one pound of dirt, once inside a building, costs more than \$500.

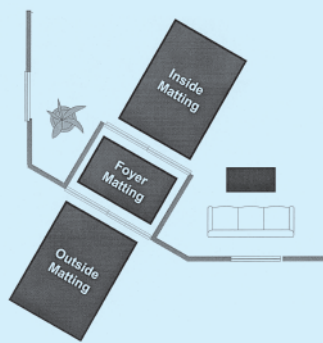
Proper, consistent carpet maintenance isn't optional: it's critical to protect the owners' or end-users' investment.



MAXIMIZE LIFE CYCLE AND WARRANTY PROTECTION

New carpets are one of the most cost-effective floor coverings. Even so, carpet represents a major investment. Above and beyond the initial purchase cost, it has been estimated that over the life of a carpet, maintenance expenses average between 50 to 70% of the total cost. Still, keeping an existing carpet often makes more sense than replacing it. Why? Because the longer a carpet lasts, the less it costs. The key to protecting that investment and extending the life cycle of carpet is frequent, proper maintenance. Thanks to today's newer carpets made with ultra-durable fibers, state-of-the-art dyeing techniques, and sophisticated tufting and backing systems, properly maintained carpet lifetime expectations can rival that of some hard-surface floor coverings.

Walk-Off Mat Placement



The more soil that's eliminated before it enters the building, the easier it is to keep carpets clean and the less expensive it is to clean them.

Most carpet manufacturers have detailed maintenance recommendations that specify methods, equipment and materials for routine and heavy-duty cleaning. The carpet warranty may be voided if these recommendations are not followed. Therefore, to protect the owner's investment, it is critical for designers to include the manufacturer's recommended carpet maintenance in their specifications. It's just as important for facility managers to follow these recommendations, whether the maintenance crew is in-house or contracted janitorial professionals. If in doubt, contact the manufacturer. Your StarNet flooring project expert is an excellent resource for knowing who to contact, and what questions to ask.



GOOD DESIGN AND PLANNING EQUALS EASIER MAINTENANCE

Specifying the right construction and pattern for carpeted spaces goes a long way in making maintenance easier. "Design 101" should be employed for selecting carpets, fibers and backings that will be installed in light, medium and heavy-traffic spaces (Chart 1). Facility managers, designers, maintenance personnel and others responsible for commercial carpet maintenance should partner on specification development. The team should also work together to develop and sustain a complete maintenance program for their commercial facility.



A good maintenance program pays for itself in preserving the carpet's appearance, extending the carpet's service life, keeping other interior surfaces cleaner and improving indoor air quality.



CLEARING THE AIR

The impact of carpet on indoor air quality remains a hot topic (see StarLog Volume 1, Issue 3, "Carpet Air Quality," on www.starnetflooring.com). All IAQ debate aside, experts do agree that proper carpet maintenance improves indoor environments by removing debris, microscopic particles and allergens from carpet fibers

and backing. The cleaner the carpet, the cleaner the air, the healthier the indoor environment. Carpet cleaning equipment needs to be in good working order and used by trained personnel to ensure that dirt taken out of carpet is not released into the building interior or HVAC system. The best advice is to work with professionals who have invested in quality maintenance equipment, and whose employees are well trained in maintenance methods and materials.



The cleaner the carpet, the cleaner the air and the healthier the indoor environment.



CARING FOR CARPETS

A well thought-out maintenance program keeps carpets looking new, longer. Even geriatric carpets can get a new lease on life, thanks to contemporary maintenance methods that can work wonders lifting grime, brightening colors and restoring fiber "cush." Naturally, the older carpets are, the more maintenance they require to restore aesthetics and deliver optimum performance. New or old, a good maintenance program can significantly improve carpet appearance and longevity. Your StarNet flooring project expert can help you devise a maintenance program that's right for your carpet.

Carpet care is a multi-level process:





-  Preventative — walk-off mats placed at all outdoor entrances, inside vestibules and elevators — trap soil before it has a chance to migrate to other floored areas. The more soil that's eliminated before it enters the building, the easier it is to keep carpets clean and the less expensive it is to clean them. Mats should be large enough to cover the traveling distance for several footsteps. Select colors appropriate to traffic areas and local soil conditions. Similarly, chair mats prevent casters from grinding soil into the carpet and breaking down carpet fibers.
-  Surface Cleaning — regular vacuuming and spot prevention — should form the basis for every maintenance routine. The Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) estimates that vacuuming can remove more than 80 percent of dry soil on a daily basis. It's important to wipe up spills as they occur, before they have a chance to set in and stain carpet fibers.
-  Interim Cleaning — pile lifting, wet or dry spot removal, and dry cleaning or hot water extraction in high traffic areas — helps carpets retain appearance.
-  Restorative or Deep Cleaning — hot water extraction, or whatever the carpet manufacturer recommends — is necessary on a periodic basis to remove embedded abrasive soil that can damage carpet.

Chart I

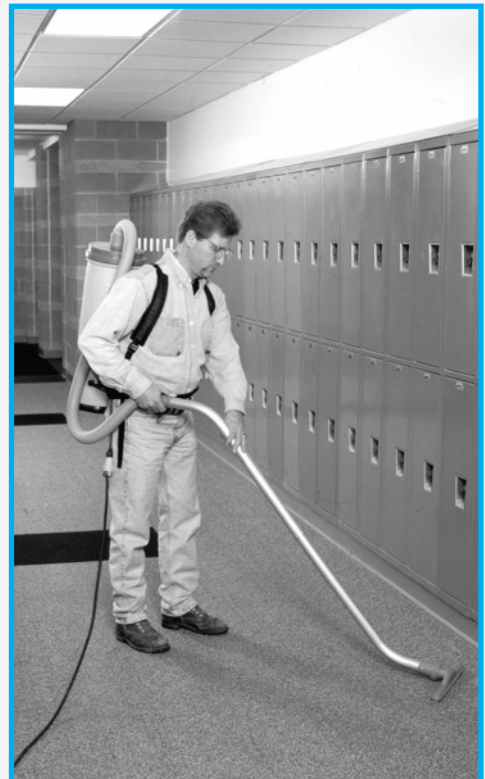
Traffic	Types of Spaces	Specification Recommendations	Maintenance*
Heavy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entry areas, elevators, ground floors, main corridors, congested spaces • Retail facilities • Airports 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mid-range, muted colors • Busy patterns • Upgrade backings • Durable nylon fibers, closed-loop construction • Dense denier 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Daily vacuum • Interim cleaning as needed • Deep cleaning 9X/year
Medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conference rooms, general work spaces, lounges • School corridors, classrooms, administrative areas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lighter colors • Medium patterning • Standard or upgrade backings • Nylon fibers, closed-loop construction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacuum 2-3X/week • Interim cleaning as needed • Deep cleaning 6X/year
Light	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upper building levels, executive offices, conference rooms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Light or dark colors, solid colors, • Simple patterns and/or textures • Wool, nylon or polypropylene fibers, cut pile construction • Any denier density • Standard backings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vacuum weekly • Interim cleaning as needed • Deep cleaning 3X/year

* All spaces—Spot cleaning as soon as the spill occurs



CARPET CLEANING PROFESSIONALS

While even Average Joe can handle vacuuming and blotting up spills in the workplace, a thorough commercial maintenance program should be planned and executed by professionals. In-house staff and contracted janitorial services are most proficient at operating commercial vacuums and using spot removal kits. But, comprehensive maintenance for deep carpet cleaning is the province of specialists. Companies dedicated to maintaining floor coverings have made a substantial investment in employee training, equipment and materials. StarNet members are floor covering experts and will be happy to guide you to the right resources, including a new StarNet Maintenance Program. Call StarNet for more information.



Vacuuming can remove more than 80% of dry soil on a daily basis. It's the simplest and most important element of a maintenance program.

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StarNet Commercial Flooring Cooperative
44 East Ridge Road
Ridgefield, CT 06877
(800) 787-6381 Fax: (203) 431-6610
ljdstarnet@aol.com
www.starnetflooring.com