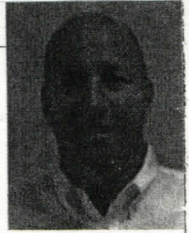


Candles & Carpet

Candle wax inevitably finds its way on to restaurants' carpeted floors. Here are some tips for removing the stubborn substance.

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On the tables of most moderate to high-end restaurants can be found candles. Many are enclosed in holders while others are placed in candlesticks. They provide an extra touch of elegance for any restaurant and make that "special evening" for diners all the more memorable.

But candles can cause some serious cleaning and maintenance issues. Over time or due to accidents, candle wax finds its way on to the restaurant's carpeted floors. This can even be caused just by blowing out the candle. The burst of air releases candle wax into the air, which then falls and collects on the carpet.

This problem is complicated if the restaurant is using colored candles instead of clear or white candles. Red, orange, yellow and blue candles have a dye in them that stains the carpet. So now, not only is candle wax building up on the carpet, it has some color to it too.

Some managers might believe

that removing candle wax on carpeted floors is a simple process. Just scrape it up with a knife and clean the area with a cloth. If only it were that easy! The following should help managers and restaurant custodial workers better understand the problems candle wax can cause as well as some in-house and professional ways of removing it.

AN INTRODUCTION TO CANDLE WAX

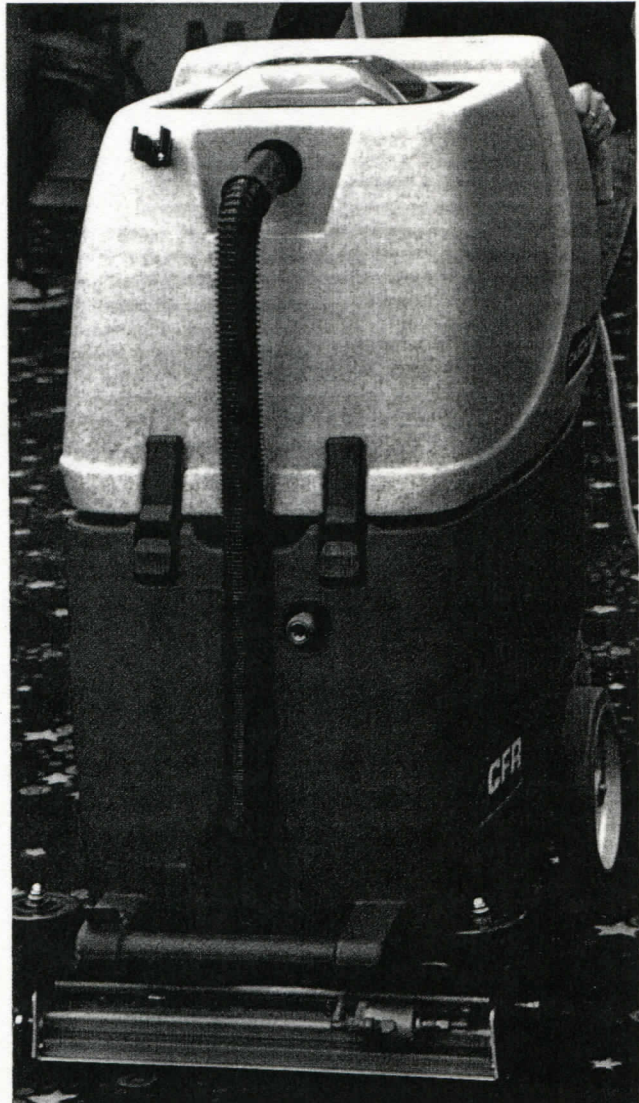
Candle wax is the most common type of wax spilled onto carpets in both commercial and residential settings and, due to the high heat and coloring of the wax during the spill, can be one of the most diffi-

cult to remove.

Most candles are made from petroleum byproducts but they may also be derived from beehives or plant and animal sources. Although similar removal tech-

niques usually work no matter what the candle is made of, this is not always the case. The candle composition can impact how difficult the wax is to remove.

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bers. This can be worse with petroleum-based candles and when the carpets are made of olefin or polyester, which are manmade fibers that also contain petroleum byproducts.

If the carpet is made of nylon, also a manmade fiber and a very common type of carpet, removing the wax can be a bit easier; however, if the candle is dyed, it may be more difficult to remove the stain from the carpet. Wool can almost be a nightmare when it comes to removing candle wax, especially if a colored candle. Fortunately, wool is rarely used in commercial settings today.

SIMPLE, IN-HOUSE WAYS TO REMOVE CANDLE WAX

The following in-house technique can be used to remove candle wax and works especially well if the wax is from clear or white candles. Additionally, it is most successful if performed as soon as the wax is noted on the floor. The longer wax "sits" on carpet fibers, the more dust and soil it can collect, which may require calling in a professional to remove.

Before describing the procedure, a disclaimer is called for. This process calls for heat, which can cause the wax, especially the dye, to be driven farther into the carpet fibers. To prevent this from happening, perform the process as quickly as possible to minimize the amount of heat applied to the carpet.

The first step is to place a clean, white cotton towel over the problem area. Place a moderately hot

iron (low setting) over the towel and gently move it back and forth over the wax. What occurs is referred to as heat transfer; after a few passes with the iron, the wax melts into the towel. Check the progress of the procedure. If more passes are necessary, use a fresh towel and repeat.

If the candle was clear or white, the candle wax problem was most likely solved. However, if it was a colored candle, a stain may still be present. Although custodial workers may try a spotting agent to remove the stain, it is often best to call in a carpet-cleaning professional to take it from here. A technician also could perform the entire wax removal procedure.

THINGS TO KNOW ABOUT PROFESSIONAL CARPET CLEANING

If a professional is needed to remove candle wax, make sure they really are a professional. Ask them if they have been certified by IICRC, the Institute of Inspection, Cleaning and Restoration Certification, which is a nonprofit organization that teaches courses specifically on how to tackle problems such as removing candle wax and any dyes that may be in the wax.

Next, ask if they use a portable, hot-water extractor. Heat is necessary to remove candle wax. Some extractors have what is called a "perfect heat" system, which provides a consistent supply of super hot water to the wand. Further, some extractors now filter and recycle the water/cleaning solution. This uses considerably less water and chemical and allows the cleaning process to be completed much more quickly.

Finally, ask about drying times. A conventional extractor will use more than a gallon of water per minute, which may take several hours, even days, for the carpets to dry. This is totally unacceptable in a restaurant setting. Other extractors "atomize" the water, resulting in much greater moisture recovery. The end result: up to 50% more water is removed in the cleaning process, resulting in much faster drying times.

Hopefully, these tips and suggestions will help managers better understand candle wax issues. Al-

though it is hard to prevent candle wax from getting on to carpets, at least now you have some ideas on how to remove it both by in-house personnel and the professional. ♦

Doug Berjer is product manager for CFR (continuous flow recycling) which manufacturers filtering and recycling carpet extractors for the professional cleaning industry.

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