

Get Into the Groove

Escalators Offer Obvious Trap for Dirt and Debris

By Mark Baxtor

JANITORIAL MAINTENANCE plans for high-traffic lobbies tend to focus on the obvious: floors, carpets, glass, furniture, elevator buttons and escalator hand rails. Each escalator's 70 to 80 steps and risers present more of a challenge, particularly since their grooved surfaces can be a trap for dirt and sticky or greasy substances.

Escalators should be cleaned regularly to prevent corrosion and possible malfunction and to maintain appearance. Accumulated substances can begin to discolour the metal steps of the escalators. Corrosion mars the original lustre, creating something of an eyesore in a central piece of equipment that is designed to stay in service, and in the public eye, for the long-term.

Meanwhile, the very act of getting on

an escalator requires that people look down. A dirty or soiled escalator can give tenants and visitors a negative impression of the facility, its maintenance and its management.

The logistics of escalator cleaning is part of the reason the task has traditionally been postponed or overlooked. In the past, cleaning required a shutdown for extended periods while the escalator was dismantled and the risers were taken off-site to be pressure washed.

The introduction of automatic escalator cleaning systems has simplified the procedure and cut costs. It employs a cleaning machine with a tread-wide cleaning head that is positioned at the bottom of the escalator. The escalator is activated and the cleaning process occurs with little supervision necessary.

A built-in vacuum system vacuums the steps, while brushes loosen soils for removal

and pads polish the steps. The time required to thoroughly clean the escalator will depend on the build-up of debris between the treads, but a regular cleaning regimen will help to keep soiling under control and require less time than the initial procedure.

In low-rise buildings with fewer occupants the escalators may require cleaning just two to three times a year. In larger buildings or buildings with a high volume of pedestrians passing through, managers may opt for monthly or weekly cleaning. ■

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