

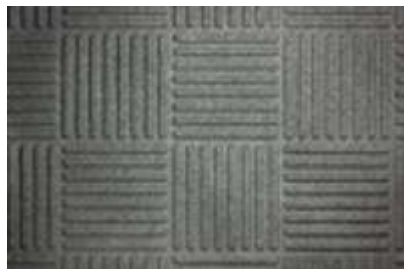


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Matting 101

By **Christopher R. Tricozzi** — posted 08/03/2011



For those buildings without an effective, high-performing matting system in place, a great deal of adverse weather's wrath is literally "walked in" on the feet of facility users, causing major floor care problems for custodial workers. That's why there's no better time than now for a quick review of how matting systems work and how they play an important role in keeping facilities clean, healthy, and safe year-round.

How High-Performance Matting Systems Work

At one time, matting meant little more than placing an "old rug" or something similar at entry points, hoping building users would take the time to wipe their shoes before entering. Unfortunately, some mats are still designed with little more than this concept in mind.

Effective, high-performance matting systems, on the other hand, are designed to stop water and moisture at the door. They also have the ability to hold the dirt and moisture, preventing them from reattaching to shoes and entering the facility. In fact, a well-designed matting system can trap soils and other contaminants effectively until cleaning crews remove them via vacuuming or extraction.

This type of effective containment is generally accomplished using one of the newer developments in matting systems known as "two-level" or "bi-level" construction. With this type of matting, building users walk on the top level of the mat, but the soil and moisture on their shoes falls to a lower level, preventing it from being tracked into the building.

And then there is the "Rule of 15s," which is key to any matting system. To trap as much contamination as possible, experts recommend using five feet each of three separate types of matting:

- Scraper mats, placed directly outside entries in order to catch larger debris and heavier concentrations of moisture
- Wiper/scraper mats, installed inside facilities in order to capture and trap smaller contaminants and liquids
- Wiper mats, the "final line of defense," positioned after wiper/scraper matting to remove any remaining dirt and moisture from shoe bottoms

Using this type of effective contaminant-trapping system does more than just keep facilities clean. It also enhances building safety by reducing the risk of slip-and-fall accidents.

But Do They Work?

Several organizations and studies have scientifically evaluated how much soil and



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moisture can be walked into a facility when proper matting is not installed. Here are some of their conclusions:

- Eighty percent of the soil that enters a facility is walked in through the front door
- On average, one person brings 0.02 ounces of soil into a facility every day
- If 500 people work in this facility five days per week, more than 10 ounces of soil is walked in daily
- In one year's time, that adds up to more than 160 pounds of dust, dirt, soil, and contaminants
- It can cost anywhere from US\$500 to \$800 to remove just one pound of soil from a facility
- Fifteen feet of effective, high-performance matting can trap and hold as much as 75 percent of this soil at the door; 30 feet can remove as much as 100 percent.

As mentioned, proper matting also increases safety. The National Safety Council estimates that the average cost of a slip-and-fall accident in the United States is approximately \$50,000 per incident (including lost work time, worker's compensation, and medical costs). Building managers and cleaning professionals know that these accidents and their associated costs can be minimized or even eliminated by having effective matting systems in place.

Final Thoughts

High-performance matting is an important component in terms of building maintenance and safety. But what exactly makes a matting system "high performance"?

While this term refers to the use of all three distinct parts of an effective matting system—scraper, scraper/wiper, and wiper matting—it also references the actual quality of the mats, which can be just as important to the system's overall effectiveness.

High-performance matting systems are typically manufactured using higher quality materials and are usually purchased from a janitor distributor and are not rented. These mats often come with a warranty guaranteeing their quality and life expectancy, and customers can expect them to last a year if not several years, making them cost effective.



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