



What's on the Floor and at the Door?

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For some facility managers, the placement of matting systems at key building entries is almost an afterthought; some managers simply are unaware of how important mats are to the overall health, safety, cleanliness, and appearance of a facility. However, several developments in recent years have shed more light on the importance of matting systems and their benefits, especially for those facilities involved with green cleaning.

The following interview with JoAnne Boston, Business Development Head at [Crown Mats](#), one of the oldest and largest matting companies in the United States, should help managers realize the importance of what's on the floor and at the door.

Q. Let's get right to the heart of things. Why are mats so important to a facility?

There are scores of reasons, but we should probably start with safety. To help prevent slips and falls, especially during adverse weather, was likely the key reason matting was developed in the first place. And today, it is still a key reason that managers install matting. However, mats play many roles in facilities today.

Q. What are some of these new roles?

We see two matting trends that appear to be significant. First is the placement of mats to help minimize or prevent worker fatigue. Most people don't even think about it, but the people we see every day—barbers, beauticians, chefs, checkout clerks in stores—are on their feet all day.

This standing causes fatigue, harms worker morale, decreases worker productivity, can have unfortunate health consequences, and can increase the chances for mistakes or even slips and falls. The same thing happens in factories and warehouses where worker fatigue can be an even greater problem. Anti-fatigue matting helps minimize and even prevent this fatigue in several ways, from increasing body movement and dispersing workers' weight more evenly to improving blood flow through the lower ligaments.

The other major trend that has been growing for a few years now is the use of matting systems as part of a green cleaning program. They play such a vital role in keeping soils, moisture, and contaminants outside, thus helping to reduce the amount of cleaning a facility needs, that they are now required for buildings seeking LEED certification.* For many facility managers, the first step they take when transferring from a conventional to a green cleaning system is the installation of high-performance matting.

Q. What is a high-performance matting system?

QUICK POLL

Which of the following do you think is the MOST important benefit of a green office building?



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This refers to the performance of the mat, its ability to keep moisture and contaminants from entering a facility, the quality of the mat, and often how it is selected. A high-performance mat may be bi-level, for example. This type of mat not only stops soils from being walked into a facility, it places the soil and moisture below the surface of the mat where it is stored until the mat is vacuumed or cleaned.

Additionally, a high-performance mat is typically purchased by the facility and will invariably have a much longer warranty than a mat that is rented. Rental mats may be warranted for only three months. A purchased, high-performance mat, on the other hand, may be warranted for one, two, or several years. In the end, they are not only more effective, they are more cost effective as well.

Q. Earlier you mentioned vacuuming or cleaning mats. Exactly how do you maintain mats?

Proper maintenance of the mat is important. Mats should be vacuumed regularly, preferably with an upright vacuum cleaner. In some cases—at a busy location, for instance—this may mean two, three, or more times per day. An upright vacuum cleaner has a roller brush that agitates the mat fibers, helping to release soils stored in the matting system so they can be vacuumed up. Eventually, mats also need to be cleaned. The most effective way to clean them is with a carpet extractor, which removes deeply embedded soils, moisture, and contaminants and keeps the matting performing in a top-notch manner. How often they should be cleaned depends on the amount of foot traffic in the facility.

Q. Do you have any tips on selecting matting?

For the health and cleanliness of the facility, I strongly urge facility managers to purchase mats instead of renting them for the reasons mentioned earlier. Matting is typically purchased from a distributor. An effective way to find a distributor that is well versed on matting and its importance is to ask how involved they are in green cleaning. Because matting and green cleaning are so closely interconnected, a distributor knowledgeable about green cleaning will not only realize the value of matting but will help you select the matting that best meets your needs.

Finally, don't forget to ask about the warranty. A higher-quality mat will have a longer warranty. It is manufactured to last longer and perform better, and this will be reflected in the length of the warranty.

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