

# Retail Commercial Carpet Maintenance Programs Whitepaper



## RETAIL COMMERCIAL CARPET MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

### CHALLENGE

No matter if your retail locations experience severe weather extremes or simply face annual budgetary challenges, keeping retail carpeted areas clean is an ongoing challenge. What best practice can retailers implement to help keep these areas clean and safe providing the warmth, comfort, beauty and style for which it was originally selected as the flooring choice?

### BEST PRACTICE IMPLEMENTED

It seems there are as many opinions regarding the “best” and “correct” carpet cleaning and maintenance programs as there are types of carpet. In reality, there is no single best solution or best technique for every commercial carpet need. Each best practice must be matched to the individual needs of the location and application.

This best practice details the options and professional resources associated with designing, establishing and maintaining an effective carpet maintenance program. The idea behind the paper is to provide facility managers with a concise resource that will enable him or her to gain the knowledge necessary to properly diagnose each situation and need; and then access all current resource options available to fill that need.

#### 1. Assess the current facility situation

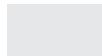
To begin, determine the specific need and level of need.

- Determine if an acceptable maintenance program is in place or if one needs to be developed.
- Define the big-picture objectives. Are they to cut costs, improve appearance or brand protection, improve the indoor environment, etc.? Be aware that the answer may be more complicated than it appears on the surface and may involve lease/tenant situations, store closings or need to address seasonal specific issues.
- Consider basic financial input such as the carpet life cycle, and any overall building changes that will affect the cleaning program budgets and costs.
- Know the specific soil challenges associated with each location. Each retail location will have soil challenges specific to the geography, store access/egress, surrounding location factors, in-store traffic, and store design. This is such an important concept that it was even highlighted in a recent Buildings.com article in which they referred to soil-related issues by writing “know your enemy”, and that means knowing your “soils”.

#### 2. Determine the effectiveness of the current carpet maintenance program

Many facilities lack even the most basic of carpet maintenance programs. While the carpet may be routinely “cleaned”, overall the location falls well short of designing and implementing an overall program.

The first recommendation to save money and extend the life cycle of the carpet is to design a simple carpet maintenance program that is suitable and scalable to your needs and facilities. To be effective, every commercial facility carpet maintenance program should contain aspects of the five elements listed below. The retailer’s specific labor and financial situation will dictate the degree to which these elements are deployed. Some of the elements can be abbreviated or enhanced depending on the retailer’s specific resources and needs.



The following are some brief examples of features that are common to all carpet maintenance programs, and can be applied even under the most financially restrictive budgets:

- Soil Prevention & Containment – Select quality mats, and maintain them daily. Cleaning programs need to include regular cleaning under the mats. It is important to remember that in reality it takes 10-15 feet of matting to capture the soils that enter the store via foot traffic. (Appendices Fig 1).
- Spill & spot procedures – Ensure that spill kits are readily available. The best kits typically use dry compounds to help treat spills quickly. Institute a simple log that tracks the types of spills, spill locations and the date/time of the spills.
- Vacuumping – Vacuuming is most effective when interior bag vacuums with multiple layers of filtration are used to minimize the re-introduction of any dust back into the environment. Use a vacuum made for commercial carpets. Make replacing vacuum bags and equipment air-flow cleaning a scheduled maintenance priority. Design and customize some simple vacuuming tips to help the facility understand how to capture the highest degree of soils within the allowable time and budget.
- Interim Cleaning – Determine which interim method is specifically recommended for your carpet by the manufacturer. Do not assume that because one method worked at one location, that it will work for all locations. Interim cleaning methods such as dry foam or dry compound cleaning, bonnet cleaning, encapsulation, and hot water extraction, all have unique features that make them the process of choice under specific conditions and in certain situations. Most importantly, remember that “interim” typically relates to scheduled timing during the year. Without scheduled interim cleanings, most carpets will become so choked with soils, that the only realistic solution available to clean them becomes moving directly to full carpet restoration. It is also important to remember that any cleaning substances added to carpet will eventually need to be removed for the long term good of the carpet. For this reason, most carpet mills in the United States will recommend some frequency of hot water extraction to accompany or supplement other interim cleaning methods. However, the downside of hot water extraction in a retail environment is the negative impacts relating to moisture. Service providers must take into account hours of operation, interior environmental controls, drying systems, and clearly understand how the specific cleaning procedures can affect carpet inventories, or risk the early degradation of these inventories.
  - Another important cost-savings measure for your interim cleaning is to identify your track-off areas, congested channels and high traffic lanes. Once identified, annual schedules will focus primarily on these areas to maximize the effectiveness of the available cleaning budget.
- Restorative Cleaning – Professionals typically define restorative as a combination of methods used to try to extend the life of carpet when it has become excessively soiled. Expect to pay between 2.5 to four times the cost of interim cleaning for restorative cleaning. Also expect that excessive soiling that necessitated the restorative clean may also have abraded and damaged the carpet causing some permanent visual differences, even after the expense of restorative care.

3 Utilize all available resources

There are a number of publically available commercial carpet program resources that reinforce the guidance contained in this best practice. These resources are available as detailed below.

a. **CRI – Carpet & Rug Institute**

Numerous publications can be downloaded for free from CRI

<http://www.carpet-rug.org/about-cri/cri-publications/downloadable-publications.cfm>

CRI's spot removal guide

<http://www.carpet-rug.org/residential-customers/cleaning-and-maintenance/spot-solver.cfm>

b. **Triple S Mat selection guide**

For more information that you may ever need on mat selection!

[http://www.triple-s.com/pis/Mats&MattingSolutionsLiterature\\_12109.pdf](http://www.triple-s.com/pis/Mats&MattingSolutionsLiterature_12109.pdf)

c. **Buildings.com**

A great quick recap of what is typically found in our carpets

<http://www.buildings.com/article-details/articleid/14875/title/top-10-soils-in-carpets.aspx>

d. **IICRC – Institute of Inspection, Cleaning, and Restoration Certification**

To locate certified professional installers, and cleaning companies

<http://www.iicrc.org/locate-a-certified-professional/>

e. **Shaw Contract Group**

For a comprehensive stain removal guide, check this document from Shaw

<http://shawfloors.com/adx/asp/adxGetMedia.aspx?DocID=3100>

4. **Appendices**

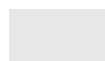
Fig 1. Carpet & Rug Institute (CRI) – Carpet Maintenance Guidelines – example of entrance mat efficacy

[http://www.carpet-rug.org/documents/publications/078\\_Carpet\\_Maintenance\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.carpet-rug.org/documents/publications/078_Carpet_Maintenance_Guidelines.pdf)

**USE PROPERLY SIZED ENTRANCE MATS**



Performing additional maintenance in entry areas and other wipe-off regions can reduce the amount of maintenance in other parts of the facility



## RESULTS OF THE BEST PRACTICE

In working with numerous retailers, certain specific best practices have consistently produced the greatest savings and raised appearance standards. Oftentimes, these are very simple solutions and provide significant monthly cleaning savings.

- The use of mats can provide overall savings of 10-15 percent annually off your floor care program
- Spot cleaning procedures, used diligently, extend the time between interim cleanings up to 25 percent

## VERIFICATION OF EFFICIENCY AND/OR SAVINGS CAPTURED

Example 1 – A problem existed at the carpeted store vestibule entrance. Vestibule was carpeted and the store had Vinyl Composition Tile (VCT) upon entering. VCT was degrading. Our solution to seasonally add additional matting for the VCT required daily vacuuming but eliminated two extra cycles per week of scrubbing and recoating the VCT section at the entrance. **Best practice – Add seasonal matting to reduce floor care costs.**

Example 2 – A problem existed with excessive spots showing up with unknown origins at a retailer with an adjacent café. Calls were coming in for spot cleaning and interim cleaning of traffic areas over and above our plan. Our solution involved performing an overnight cleaning audit in which we found employees transporting bags of garbage through the facility from the café with residue trailing behind. We provided them a sealed carrier with wheels and trained them on its use. No more trails, no more additional interim cleaning. **Best practice – Don't hesitate to audit situations before you spend. Your service providers will do this, oftentimes for free.**

Example 3 – Problem: Excessive wicking of spots after carpet cleaning. Typically this is due to the ability of carpet to hide larger spills throughout the carpet backing especially when the larger spill was directly down in one spot. Our solution involved two steps: First, we trained staff to simply log spills in a log book with location, type, and date. That helped our spot prep work during interim cleans. Second, for no additional charge to our client, we provided them with safe, effective spill kit. The kit contained dry cleaning compound that is safe and effective to aid in containing spills. We trained them for free on how to use it. Using the dry cleaning compound on spills greatly reduced wicking problems as there was less to wick back after cleaning. **Best practice – Train staff to document spills and use spill kits.**

Example 4 – Problem: Budget reduction challenges existed but store traffic remained consistent creating a need to take certain daily cleaning functions in-house while also allowing for intra-day cleaning. The solution was to provide the right sized commercial equipment on-site, which would do the job effectively and was easy to operate and maintain by in-house staff. **Best practice – At times, a balance between outsourced services and simple in-house tasks creates a more uniform appearance throughout the day.**

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DWM is a national company that provides customized, efficient solutions for all your facility maintenance needs.

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