

# Risk Control Bulletin

## Floor Mats - Controlling the Slip and Fall Exposures

RISK CONTROL



Floor mats play an important role in controlling slips and falls in commercial buildings such as stores, offices, schools, restaurants and other structures where the public is welcome. Controlling water contamination of hard surface walking areas is the goal of a good floor mat program.

Moisture can be tracked through the entrances of buildings by foot traffic or carried along by shopping carts, strollers or baby carriages. Another source of water contamination is a result of water draining off of umbrellas and rainwear. This moisture has contributed to countless slip and fall incidents with resultant injuries and subsequent insurance company claim payments.

The use of floor mats has been one method of addressing this issue, with new materials and methodologies being developed and marketed. For example, there are mats that are specifically designed for outdoor use where they can be protected from the weather by a canopy or awning. The use of outdoor mats which can be used to scrape off particulate matter and snow or ice, with secondary scrape/wipe mats within vestibules and lobbies can be very effective in controlling moisture infiltrations. Of course interior scrape/wipe mats should be followed by additional wiping/finishing floor mats along the interior of the building. In the cases where the outdoor mat cannot be protected from the elements, the scraping mat area on the interior must be expanded as would the length of any additional interior floor mats to ensure proper moisture containment.

There is no “one size fits all” remedy to the slip and fall exposure arising from the tracked in moisture problem. Each remedy using floor mats must be carefully tailored and tested for adequacy for each facility. The only way to be sure that the coverage is sufficient is to examine the floor beyond the end of the mat to see if there are contaminants on the floor which would be indicative of the need for additional coverage. If you see wet footprints your matting solution needs improvement.

So where does a building owner/occupant start? The Carpet and Rug Institute recommends that a minimum of 12 to 15 feet of mat coverage be provided to remove 90% of tracked in soil. The American National Standards Institute A1264.2<sup>1</sup> standard similarly requires that 80% of soil entering a building should be trapped within the first 15 feet on a carpeted surface. You should also consider the number of people using each entrance, along with the use of shopping carts and other wheeled equipment. Finally, consider the type of weather exposure such as snow or rain. Snow requires more matting especially of the scraping kind.

The key element in developing a floor mat remedy is to determine how many footsteps on mats are needed in order to trap the contaminants. A good “rule of thumb” for running lengths of mats is:<sup>2</sup>

Weather Conditions	Number of Walking Steps	Number of Feet Based on an Average 30 Inch Pace
Snow	10-12	25 - 30 feet
Rain	8-10	20 - 25 feet
Dry	6-8	15 - 20 feet

Remember, if there is excess soil, moisture, or wear beyond the end of the mat, the floor mat coverage is insufficient. This is one instance where it is always better to have too much coverage than too little. Be sure to consult your matting supplier for mats specific to your building demands.

<sup>1</sup> ANSI/ASSE A1264.2—2006 *Standard for the Provision of Slip Resistance on Walking/Working Surfaces.*

<sup>2</sup> Wolf, D., *Keep It Clean By Being Up Front, Professional Retail Store Maintenance.* September 1998.