

# The Care of Terrazzo



Terrazzo floors have **ease of maintenance**, but this does not mean that **NO CARE IS REQUIRED**. Once you understand the care requirements in the early stages of a new terrazzo floor, you lessen possible problems, and recognize the economy of care and the aesthetics of this product. **NTMA terrazzo flooring specifications highly recommend a sealer applied to this surface immediately following the final polishing.**

Sealers help protect the surface and inhibit the penetration of spilled materials upon initial contact with the terrazzo floor. Spills must be cleaned immediately in order to prevent stains caused by repeated or long term exposure. Even standing water can eventually damage some sealers.

As most sealers are low solids liquid material, they do not normally produce a high gloss sheen appearance to the floor surface. When a building is eventually occupied, the terrazzo sealer can be stripped or used as a base and the surface may be retreated as implemented by ownership. The eventual degree of gloss is determined by the particular products selected and the recommended application process. This includes proprietary options.

## TAKE THE NECESSARY TIME TO LEARN WHICH TERRAZZO SYSTEM YOU ARE MAINTAINING

There are three types of binders used to anchor marble chips or other aggregate in your terrazzo floor. Originally, and still used, is a Portland cement product; next a polyacrylate modified cement. The most common matrix today is epoxy resin.

**All Terrazzo Systems:** Contain marble or other types of aggregate materials that have surface exposure. Marble aggregates have a low porosity. Other aggregate types may have little or no porosity.

**Portland Cement Systems:** The portion of this floor system that most benefits from primary protection is the Portland cement binder. Sealers will also assist protecting the marble chips or other aggregate.

**Epoxy Resin Systems:** The binder for this terrazzo system is fundamentally non-porous. Sealers assist protecting the aggregate and normally enhance aesthetics of the surface only.

Although each system has the role of anchoring the aggregate into the topping, maintenance procedures are essentially common to all terrazzo installations.

## OWNER'S GUIDE FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF TERRAZZO FOR STANDARD FINISHES

**MAINTENANCE PRECAUTIONS:** Harsh cleaners and sealers can damage terrazzo. Only materials that are neutral pH should be used when scrubbing or mopping floors. Sealers should achieve a slip resistance coefficient of friction rating applicable to code. Water based sealers are most commonly recommended and utilized today. Apply, in one or more coats, in accordance with the instructions of the sealer manufacturer. This can also be followed by a water based finish (dressing) for daily or weekly buffing if a high sheen is desired.

**CLEANING PROCEDURES:** Neutral cleaners are designed to react only in solution with clean water, mixed in accordance to the manufacturer instructions, and allowed to remain on the floor surface for several minutes. This provides the necessary time for the grime-dissolving action to take place. Then rinse the dirt-laden solution from the surface by squeegee, vacuum or mopping. Rinse with ample clean water. It is important to keep the floor wet during this entire cleaning process so the dirt and cleaning residue does not dry on the surface. Auto-scrubbers are recommended for larger areas.

**FAQ** "How often must we sweep or scrub this floor?" is answered by the amount of traffic that moves across the floor daily. Daily dust mopping is a requirement in most public buildings. Daily dust mopping removes both the dust and the grit tracked into the building.

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## CUSTODIAN'S GUIDE TO THE PROPER MAINTENANCE OF TERRAZZO

FOLLOW THESE MINIMUM MAINTENANCE SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP YOUR TERRAZZO FLOOR CLEAN AND LONG-LASTING:

**DAILY:** DUST MOP - Hand work stubborn stains and scuff marks with neutral cleaner diluted in warm water.

**WEEKLY:** DAMP MOP LIGHTLY SOILED FLOORS WITH NEUTRAL CLEANER - Heavily soiled floors should be scrubbed with a mechanical buffing machine and neutral cleaner. Mop up residue with clean water before it dries. Allow to dry and buff with a soft dry brush. Auto-scrubbers are recommended for larger areas.

**NOTE:** ALLOW YOUR NEUTRAL CLEANER, ONCE APPLIED TO THE TERRAZZO SURFACE, TIME TO REACT. IT IS DESIGNED TO LOOSEN FOREIGN MATTER. SEVERAL MINUTES SHOULD BE ADEQUATE, BUT DO NOT ALLOW SOLUTION TO DRY ON THE SURFACE.

**AS REQUIRED:** Strip all old sealer and any finish coats. Re-seal clean floor.

**CAUTION:** Before deviation from the instructions, contact your local NTMA Terrazzo Contractor for advice. ALWAYS KEEP RINSE WATER, MOPS & PAILS CLEAN!

## DO'S AND DON'T'S FOR MAINTENANCE OF TERRAZZO FLOORING

**DO** dust mop your floors daily; this not only picks up the dust, but also the grit tracked into your building. The grit acts as an abrasive on your hard surface floor.

**DO** use maintenance products designed specifically for terrazzo.

**DO** scrub new terrazzo floors approximately once or twice a week for the initial two to three months, as the new construction dust will still be in the air and will eventually be deposited on your floor.

**DO** after the initial period, once per week, depending on the amount of foot traffic, keep your floor clean in appearance. Always rinse your floors well to prevent a build-up of cleaner residue. Use a dry cotton or microfiber cloth to dry the terrazzo floor surface.

**DO** allow your neutral cleaner, once applied to the terrazzo surface, time to react as designed to loosen foreign matter. Several minutes should be adequate, but **DON'T** allow the cleaning solution to dry on the surface.

**DO** seal your floors with a water-based sealer in accordance to the sealer manufacturer's instructions.

**DON'T** use degreasers, bleach, vinegar, ammonia or other household chemicals.

**DON'T** use purely surface waxes, or all purpose sealers. Employment of such can result in slippery surfaces.

**DON'T** use all purpose cleaners containing water soluble inorganic or crystallizing salts, harmful alkali or acids. Use of such products could prove harmful to your terrazzo floor.

(Take care if using abrasive disc/pads with proprietary systems so grout is not removed and pinholes exposed.)