



# NATIONAL TERRAZZO & MOSAIC ASSOCIATION

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## CLEANING CEMENT TERRAZZO

A problem that frequently occurs with new terrazzo floors is a cloudy or milky surface appearance. Contractors often meet with little success in their efforts to eliminate clouding because they most often attempt to correct the situation with repeated applications of the same materials and procedures that permitted the original difficulty.

The condition is created by the basic chemistry relating to the hardening of cement.

The components of Portland cement powder change their physical and chemical form when combined with water. The result is calcium hydroxide, better known as lime, which is produced at a rate of about 0.6 of a lb. for each pound of cement used. Most of this converted lime is used to bind the terrazzo together, but there is a certain amount of free lime that remains on the surface and in the pores of the floor after the final grinding.

Water by itself is capable of dissolving only about one-sixtieth of the free lime. The remainder must be disposed of by other means. Clear water flushing and scrubbing will not be totally effective in removing all the free lime from the pores of a new terrazzo surface. A detergent action is needed.

Terrazzo cleaners should be neither acidic nor highly alkaline; they should be neutral.

Clouding is created when cleaners react with the residue of free lime on the floor, which causes insoluble calcium scum. Repeating the cleaning procedures with the same materials only adds to the condition. Applying a sealer or wax on top will lock in the scum under the transparent shield. This makes everything worse, for the sealing film must then be removed to expose the source of the problem for corrective treatment. This magnifies the problem as now the sealer must be removed to correct the problem.

This situation can be minimized by thoroughly cleaning the floor with proper chemicals before using any sealers or other film forming surface treatments. Neutral detergents thoroughly clean a floor without reacting to or combining with any free lime deposit or residue.

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