

## **Terrazzo Care and Maintenance**

### **OWNER'S GUIDE**

#### **MAINTENANCE PRECAUTIONS:**

Harsh cleaners and sealers can damage Terrazzo; thus, only materials that are neutral with a PH Factor between 7 and 10 should be used when scrubbing or mopping floors. Avoid all-purpose cleaners or soaps containing water soluble, inorganic, or crystallizing salts, harmful alkali or acids. Sweeping compounds contain oil, which is not only a fire hazard, but will penetrate and could permanently discolor your floor. Many of these compounds contain sand, which is hard to sweep, and can abrade your floor if not removed. Most owners want to see a high sheen on their floors. Since safety in all buildings is a concern, use a water-based sealer in the acrylic family especially designed for Terrazzo use. The Underwriters Laboratories classification of this sealer should include a slip resistance with a coefficient of friction rating of minimum 0.5. Solvent-based sealers have a tendency to discolor with age and pose a removal problem for the user, especially when wear patterns develop or discoloration dictates stripping the surface. This Association sells no product and uses generic terms in our suggestions. We do recommend acrylic water based sealers mopped on, in one or more coats, in accordance with the instructions of the manufacturer. This can also be followed by an acrylic water-based finish 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 does not reabsorb in the floor. The frequently asked question, "How often must we sweep or scrub this floor?" is answered by the amount of traffic that moves across the floor daily. But, it is normal that daily dust mopping is a requirement in most public buildings. Daily dust mopping removes both the dust and the grit tracked into the building. The grit acts as an abrasive on your hard surface.

#### **ATTENTION!!! 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. One is a Portland Cement product; the second is a Polyacrylic modified Portland Cement which includes an acrylic additive. The third is an Epoxy or Polyester system, often referred to as a resinous thin-set system. Although each system has the role of anchoring the aggregate into the topping, the treatment of each does vary. 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 avoid possible problems, and recognize the economy of care and the aesthetic values of this product.

#### **PORTLAND CEMENT SYSTEMS:**

A Terrazzo surface has a minimum 70% density marble chip surface exposure. The marble chips have a low porosity of absorption; thus, the portion of this floor system that needs protection is the Portland Cement binder that has 30% or less surface exposure. This is why our specification requires a penetrating type sealer applied to this surface immediately following the final polishing. This seals off the minute pores in binder. Internal protection has been achieved, but since it is a penetrating liquid material, it is not expected to produce a sheen to the floor surface. Unless it has been specified otherwise, it is normal that once the owner occupies the building he provides his own maintenance and will seal the surface that will result in the sheen desired. A new Portland Cement Terrazzo floor initially may appear to be mottled in color, especially in darker colors. This is the normal characteristic of this product, as it is going through the curing process. This blotchy appearance will gradually disappear as you maintain your floor while the curing cycle runs its course.

#### **RESINOUS TYPE TERRAZZO SYSTEMS (Epoxy and Polyester):**

Since the matrix in these systems becomes a non-porous surface, no penetrating-type sealer is used on this floor. Use only surface sealers, as mentioned in the contents of these instructions.

### **CUSTODIAN'S GUIDE**

**Follow these instructions to keep you terrazzo floor clean and long lasting. These are minimum maintenance suggestions:**

#### **CAUTION:**

Before deviation from the instructions, contact your local Terrazzo Contractor for advice. Always keep rinse water, mops & pails clean!

#### **Daily:**

Sweep using yarn-wick brush treated with sweeping compound. 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 dry brush.

*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.*

**Semi-Annually:**

Strip all old sealer and any finish coats. Reseal clean floor.

**WARNING!!**

It is important that any sealer or dressing be listed by underwriter's laboratories for slip resistance.

The preceding minimum maintenance suggestions have proven over time to provide the owner with the lowest maintenance cost of any floor system.

**Some options to the above include the following:**

- Apply high luster finishes on top of the sealer to the desired sheen. These normally require the added expense of spray-buffing to maintain the sheen. Terrazzo, unlike other floors, does not require this for wear protection.
- There is another process that would produce a sheen without the application of sealers. As you clean your floors with the neutral cleaner / water solution, your final mop picks up the majority of this cleaner, but still some remains on the surface. After several such procedures, the residue of cleaner will become buffable and result in a sheen with buffing after each washing. This method of achieving a sheen never requires the stripping action, thus, reducing your maintenance costs. This is not recommended in areas exposed to staining materials.
- As of late, some owners have been testing new technologies from the marble and granite industries to produce super high gloss finishes without day to day recoating. These include diamond pads for mechanical honing and polishing as well as crystallization products. As of this time the long term maintenance cost of these systems is not known by this Association.

*Note: In the event that your floor becomes heavily soiled, consult with your local terrazzo contractor or this association for directions before using any miracle cleaner suggested by someone not familiar with terrazzo. Ignoring this warning could prove harmful to your floor surface.*

**DO'S AND DON'TS****Helpful Tips for Terrazzo Maintenance:**

Your Terrazzo has been ground and polished and sealed with a penetrating Terrazzo Sealer. This protects your surface from immediate stains, but no spillage should be ignored and allowed to soak and dry into the floor. Good housekeeping procedures require that your floor remains clean. With proper maintenance procedures, your Terrazzo floor should give you ease of maintenance and a lifetime of performance, not to mention the aesthetics. Before you commence with a maintenance program or purchase materials, it is best to understand this flooring system by reading available details of care from your Terrazzo Contractor or this Association.

**DO's**

- DO ask your installing Terrazzo Contractor to recommend the proper neutral cleaner and sealers to be used on your floor.
- 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 scrub your floors a minimum of twice a week, where a new Terrazzo floor has been installed for the initial two to three months, as the construction dust is still in the air, and will eventually be deposited on your floor. After this 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 that could become slippery.
- DO seal your floors with a water-based acrylic sealer in accordance to the manufacturer's instructions. Normally, a new floor requires two or more coats, which provide a good sheen for a period of 45 to 60 days, before needing additional coats. Sealer should be classified by Underwriters Laboratories, as slip resistant with a rating of minimum 0.5.
- DO use maintenance products designed for Terrazzo.
- 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 DO NOT allow solution to dry on surface.

**DON'TS**

- 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.
- DON'T use cheap cleaners or sealers since the majority of your maintenance costs is labor.
- DON'T try miracle cleaners or sealers on your floor without getting an opinion on such products from your local Terrazzo Contract or this Association.

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