



ICS 2011

Matting 101

The evening of February 2, 2011, will certainly go down as a night to remember in Chicago history. Who could forget 60-mile-per-hour winds, blinding snow, and freezing temperatures bringing the city to a standstill for two days? It was definitely the most powerful blizzard to hit the city in more than a decade.

Of course, Chicago is certainly not alone when it comes to foul weather during this year's winter. Cold, freezing rain, and snow have hit from Maine to New Mexico, making this one of the worst winters in decades across the country. Yet despite Mother Nature's best efforts, life quickly returned to normal: children went back to school, adults returned to work, and city life continued as always despite the massive piles of snow left behind by the blizzard of 2011. The big concern now is how schools, office buildings, and scores of other types of facilities weathered these powerful storms.

One thing is certain: for those buildings without an effective, high-performing matting system in place, a great deal of this winter's wrath was literally "walked in" on the feet of facility users, causing major clean-up problems for custodial workers and facility managers. That's why there's no better time than now for a quick review of "Matting 101" -- that is, how high-performing matting works and why it's so crucial when addressing winter's tough weather conditions. In fact, as we shall see, matting plays an important role in keeping facilities clean, healthy, and safe year-round.

How High-Performance Matting Systems Work

Along with many other products offered by the professional cleaning industry, mats have evolved significantly in recent years. At one time, matting meant little more than placing an "old rug" or something similar at entry points, hoping building users would take the time to wipe their shoes before entering. Unfortunately, some mats are still designed with little more than this concept in mind.

Effective, high-performance matting systems, on the other hand, are designed to stop water and moisture at the door. They also have the ability to hold the dirt and moisture that is deposited on them, preventing them from reattaching to shoes and entering the

facility. In fact, truly well-designed matting systems trap soiling and other contaminants effectively until cleaning crews remove them via vacuuming or extraction.

This type of effective containment is generally accomplished using one of the newer developments in matting systems known as "two-level" or "bi-level" construction. With this type of matting, building users walk on the top level of the mat, but the soil and moisture on their shoes falls to a lower level, preventing it from being tracked into the building.

And then there is the "Rule of 15s." To trap as much contamination as possible, experts recommend using five feet each of three separate types of matting:

- Scraper mats, placed directly outside entries in order to catch larger debris and heavier concentrations of moisture
- Wiper/scraper mats, installed inside facilities in order to capture and trap smaller contaminants and liquids
- Wiper mats, the "final line of defense," positioned after wiper/scraper matting to remove any remaining dirt and moisture from shoe bottoms

Using this type of effective contaminant-trapping system does more than just keep facilities clean. They also enhance building safety by reducing the risk of slip-and-fall accidents.

But Do They Work?

Science has become a major part of the professional cleaning industry in the last few decades, as has ecological responsibility. Both cleaning professionals and their customers want proof that the products and procedures used to keep their facilities clean and healthy are really accomplishing these ends.

Fortunately, when it comes to matting, several organizations and studies have scientifically evaluated how much soil and moisture can be walked into a facility when proper matting is not installed, the impact on the facility, and how matting can improve the situation. Here are some of their conclusions:

- Eighty percent of the soil that enters a facility is walked in through the front door.

- On average, one person brings 0.02 ounces of soil into a facility every day.
- If 500 people work in this facility five days per week, more than 10 ounces of soil is walked in daily.
- In one year's time, that adds up to more than 160 pounds of dust, dirt, soil, and contaminants.
- It can cost anywhere from \$500 to \$800 to remove just one pound of soil from a facility; 33 pounds would cost between \$10,000 and \$16,000 to remove.
- Fifteen feet of effective, high-performance matting can trap and hold about 75 percent of the soil entering a facility; 30 feet can remove as much as 100 percent.

As mentioned earlier, proper matting also increases safety. The National Safety Council estimates that the average cost of a slip-and-fall accident in the United States is approximately \$50,000 per incident (including lost work time, worker's compensation, and medical costs). Savvy building managers know that these accidents and their associated costs can be minimized or even eliminated by having effective matting systems in place.

Final Thoughts

Obviously, high-performance matting is a must-have in terms of both building maintenance and safety. But what exactly makes a matting system "high performance"?

While this term obviously refers to the use of all three distinct parts of an effective matting system – scraper, scraper/wiper, and wiper matting -- it also references the actual quality of the mats, which can be just as important to the system's overall effectiveness.

High-performance matting systems are typically manufactured using higher quality materials and are usually purchased from a jansan distributor and are not rented. These mats often come with a warranty guaranteeing their quality and life expectancy, and customers can expect them to last a year if not several years making them cost effective.

About Crown Mats and Matting

For more than 60 years, Crown Mats and Matting has been a pioneer in the development and manufacture of matting products. Beginning with the invention of walk-off matting by the company's founder, R.P. Johnson, the company now has the most diverse matting product line offered in our industry. Crown sells matting through an extensive network of highly trained sales representatives throughout the United States and worldwide. These sales experts are familiar with the features and benefits of all matting systems and are able to help their clients find the right system for virtually any application.

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