



Standard Practice for Application of Floor Polishes to Maintain Vinyl Composition Tile or Flooring¹

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1. Scope

1.1 This practice covers the application of floor polishes to maintain vinyl composition tile or flooring. Floor polishes are applied to vinyl composition tile floors for protection and beautification of the floor surface. Cleaning, polish application, removal, and maintenance procedures are important functions in this process.

1.2 The values stated in inch-pound units are to be regarded as the standard. The values given in parentheses are for information only.

1.3 *This standard does not purport to address all of the safety concerns, if any, associated with its use. It is the responsibility of the user of this standard to establish appropriate safety and health practices and determine the applicability of regulatory limitations prior to use.*

2. Significance and Use

2.1 Vinyl composition tile or flooring consists of vinyl resins (suitably plasticized and stabilized) fortified with composition fibers, mineral fillers, and prime pigments. In some cases, all or part of the wearing surfaces may consist of unfilled vinyl resin that is clear or translucent. Metallic accents (chips, pigment, etc.) are frequently used to form the overall design. In general, the overall binder content is lower than that of homogeneous vinyl tile. For the purpose of this practice, vinyl composition also includes vinyl asbestos tile.

3. Initial Treatment, New Floors

3.1 Do not scrub vinyl composition tile floors for about 4 to 5 days after the floor has been installed. This waiting period allows sufficient time for the adhesive to set properly. However, it is good practice to clean the floor lightly and apply a polish as soon as it has been installed. Lightly mop with a dilute floor cleaning solution (following the manufacturer's dilution recommendations for damp mopping) to remove surface soil, and then apply one or two coats of a good grade

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of emulsion polish. Care should be taken during these operations not to flood the floor resulting in excess polish being “worked into” the seams or joints in the flooring.

3.2 Sweep the floor frequently to keep it free of foreign matter, dust, and dirt.

3.2.1 For this purpose, treated mops or dust cloths may be used provided they are treated in such a manner that no deposits of treatment compound are left on the floor.

4. Thorough Cleaning

4.1 After the 4 to 5 day waiting period on new floors or as needed on previously installed floors, scrub thoroughly to remove all dirt, surface soil, temporary floor polish coats, etc.

4.2 Use a suitable floor cleaner diluted with warm water 100 to 120°F (37.8 to 48.9°C) in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

4.2.1 Do not use cleaners containing abrasives or aromatic or aliphatic petroleum distillates. Alkaline cleaners with a pH higher than eleven at the use concentrations are not recommended.

4.3 Apply the cleaner solution without flooding the floor.

4.4 Allow the cleaner solution to remain on the floor undisturbed for a few minutes but not long enough for it to dry.

4.5 Scrub until all dirt and soil is loosened from the floor. Power machines fitted with a scrub brush or a very mild scrubbing type of synthetic pad may be used to hasten cleaning action. Avoid coarse grades of synthetic pads or steel wool to prevent tile damage.

4.6 After scrubbing, take up the cleaner solution using a mop or wet vacuum.

4.7 Rinse the floor thoroughly with clean, cool water but do not flood the floor during this operation. The purpose is to remove all traces of cleaner and soil so that the performance of any subsequent coating is not adversely affected. Take up the rinse water.

4.8 Allow the floor to dry before applying floor polish.

5. Polish Application

5.1 Only floor polishes that are recommended for use on vinyl composite tile and flooring should be used. These floor

polishes should be removable with strippers recommended for use on the same flooring.

5.2 Apply the polish evenly in a thin, uniform coat with an applicator or mop. If new mops or applicators are used, they should be cleaned by soaking in warm water until the size is removed, rinsed, and squeezed damp dry prior to use.

5.2.1 *Procedure for Application by Mop. This procedure is essential with surface embossed patterns to prevent polish accumulation in the depressed areas*—Dip the mop into the polish and squeeze out the excess with a squeeze-type wringer. Apply to the floor by moving the mop in a side-to-side or figure eight motion across the surface of the floor. Turn the mop frequently to present fresh surfaces of the mop to the floor. Before the mop “works dry” redip it into the polish, squeeze out the excess, and repeat the operation until the entire floor is coated. Avoid excessively heavy coats of polish. However, do not attempt to spread the coating too thinly as streaking or nonuniform gloss may be encountered.

5.3 Allow the polish to dry. Drying usually takes 20 to 30 min, but the time will depend upon the air and floor temperature, relative humidity, and air flow.

5.4 Apply a second coat of the polish in the same manner as the first and allow it to dry.

5.5 Some polishes may be improved by buffing with a soft brush or other suitable buffing media after each coat.

5.6 Additional coats may be applied to improve appearance or enhance protective qualities.

6. Maintenance

6.1 Dry mop or sweep the floor as needed to remove surface dirt and foreign matter. For this purpose, use treated mops or treated dust cloths provided that they are treated in such a manner that they leave no deposits of treatment compound on the floor.

6.2 When the appearance of the floor warrants it, damp mop the floor to remove surface dirt and some scuff marks. For this purpose use a clean mop wrung out in clean, cool water or in a very dilute solution of a suitable cleaner. Do not flood the floor. In the case of buffable coatings, periodic buffing will remove smear and scuff marks and improve the appearance.

6.3 Under some types of traffic (where polish film has worn away without noticeable black marking or soil embedment) recoating can be done following the damp mopping in 6.2. Apply one or two thin coats as needed and buff if desired.

6.4 When the floor is noticeably soiled or black marked, scrub lightly with a solution of a suitable cleaner. For this operation, use just enough mechanical action to remove the dirt. It is not necessary or desirable to remove all of the previous coats of floor polish. Thus, a fairly dilute solution of the cleaner will suffice and the manufacturer’s recommendations for this dilution should be followed. Take up the cleaner and rinse the floors as described previously. This operation is referred to as a light-duty cleaning and not as polish-stripping. If a few stubborn black marks remain after this operation, they can usually be removed on a spot basis with a dry No. 00 steel wool or a fine synthetic pad. Alternatively spray buff tech-

niques utilizing a power machine, a suitable synthetic pad, and a suitable spray buff cleaning product may be performed to maintain the floor.

6.4.1 Apply one or two thin coats of floor polish as the need arises using the same technique as for the first application except that it is not necessary to coat up against walls, cabinets, or other fixed units where there is no traffic. Staying 6 to 12 in. (152 to 305 mm) away from these objects will prevent problems of polish build-up and will reduce the frequency with which the floors will have to be stripped.

6.5 Spot cleaning and polish application can be done at pivot points, drinking fountains, push doors, or other areas that are subjected to heavy traffic. Separate cleaning and polishing steps may be used or spray buff techniques may be employed wherein emulsion polishes are spray-applied to the localized area and burnished with a fine-grade synthetic pad to loosen dirt, restore the gloss, and provide protection.

7. Stripping

7.1 Continue maintenance as described in 6 until obvious build-ups of polish occur at certain areas on the floor. When this occurs strip the floor with a concentrated solution of a suitable stripper using the dilution recommended by the manufacturer.

7.2 Apply the stripping solution liberally, without flooding, to the floor by mop or other suitable means.

7.3 Allow the solution to remain on the floor for a few minutes but not long enough to dry.

7.4 Scrub with a stiff brush until the old polish film is loosened. Synthetic stripping pads or steel wool may be used to hasten the removal action. Power machines using either a scrub brush, synthetic stripping pad, or steel wool may also be used to hasten the removal action.

NOTE 1—If the floor tile or flooring is known or suspected to contain asbestos, guidelines as established by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) should be followed. The guidelines are: (1) Strip as infrequently as possible; (2) Properly train the staff and follow appropriate work practices; (3) Floors should be adequately wet during the stripping operation; do **not** perform dry stripping; (4) If the machine used to remove the wax or finish coat has variable speeds, it should be run at a slow speed (about 175-190 rpm) during the stripping operation; (5) Select the least abrasive pad possible; (6) Do not over-strip the floors. Over-stripping can damage the floor and may cause a release of asbestos fibers. Do **not** operate a floor machine with an abrasive pad on unwaxed or unfinished floors.

7.5 Take up the cleaning solution with a wet vacuum or mop.

7.6 Rinse the floor well with clear, cool water and take up the water.

7.7 If some polish film remains, repeat stripping operations in those areas.

7.8 Allow sufficient time for floor to dry thoroughly.

7.9 Apply one or more thin coats of polish (as needed) following the procedure outline in Section 5. Maintain as described in Section 6.

8. Keywords

8.1 floor polish; maintenance; polish application; polish stripping; vinyl composition

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