



# 5 Easy steps to improve your floor cleaning

An Arrow County  
How to Guide

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Maintaining the floors within any building can utilise anything from 5-20% of the cleaning budget. It is rarely the case of one-solution fits-all. There are a variety of surface types, levels of usage, footfall and area size to accommodate. Situational and environmental requirements also have to be taken into account when planning any floor care.

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### **About the Author**

Bruce Blackledge – Managing Director

Bruce oversees Arrow's strategy, provides direction and coordination to the teams within the business and drive the company's growth plans.

Over the years he has built up a wide-ranging knowledge of the business, Arrow's customers and suppliers which helps him to ensure that Arrow continue to improve their performance and put

## Introduction

The condition of a building's floors can have a huge effect upon the perceptions of cleanliness to its patrons and visitors. Any dirt can harbour harmful bacteria or microorganisms which in general public access areas (for example sports halls), is a contamination risk, and unacceptable within many critical environments for example healthcare.

80% of contamination entering critical environments does so on feet or wheels. If left uncontrolled, floor level contamination can be redistributed into the air by vortices caused by any movement of a body through the environment. In addition, unprotected flooring enables contaminants to be picked up on shoes and on the wheels of carts where they are re-distributed by being tracked into other areas.

Cleaning professionals face a huge challenge to minimise this risk quickly and efficiently with ever reducing budgets and increasing expectations to do more at a higher standard. Fortunately, due to the advances made within the industry in terms of equipment, processes and chemicals, it is possible to reduce floor care costs up to 50%.

Prevention is better than cure so ensuring that all appropriate measures are in place to prevent contamination in the first place will reduce the challenge.

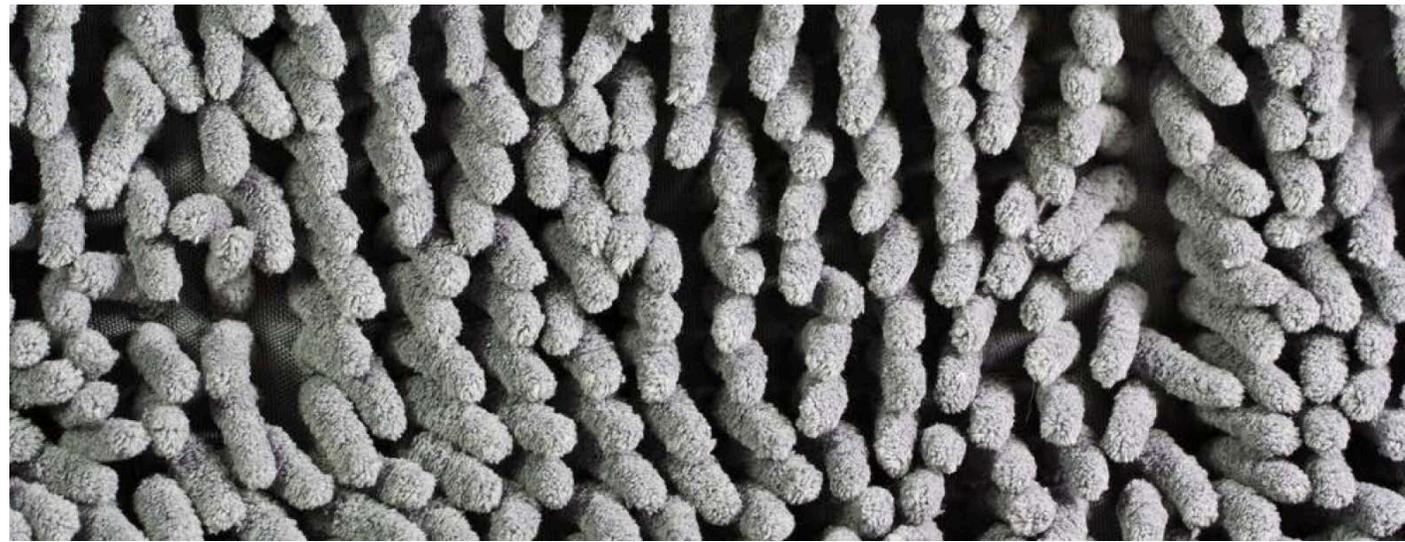
Ultimately the floors will have to be cleaned regularly. Here is our best practice guide for streamlining this activity.



“80% of contamination entering critical environments does so on feet or wheels.”

## 1. Assess the challenge

- ▶ You will need to assess the materials of the floor areas within your facility. Do you have soft flooring such as carpeted areas? Or hard flooring such as stone, vinyl, Linoleum, wood or a combination of the two? When was the last time your floors received a deep clean? What condition are they currently in? How do your floors look? Aesthetics are an important factor to consider as this is the impression it gives to facility users. Are your floors dull or have clear “traffic marks”? Could this be down to wear and tear from ineffective cleaning?
- ▶ Often dirt is tracked through particularly in high traffic areas which damages the surface of the flooring despite your best efforts to complete a daily floor care routine. The use of matting to trap dirt in doorways can help prevent a substantial amount of corrosive / dirt particles from damaging the floor.
- ▶ A good way to measure how effective your current cleaning methods are would be to perform an ATP or adenosine triphosphate monitoring test before and after cleaning.
- ▶ Measuring and mapping the areas you have to clean is often a good planning tool as you can calculate the resources you need to complete the whole cleaning operation. Some surface types will take longer than others, so anticipating time and materials required on a case by case basis is essential.
- ▶ Once you have a good assessment on paper, its worth discussing your plans with your cleaning staff. See what they have learnt from carrying out the tasks day in day out. They can have really useful practical insights that can be overlooked in desk based planning. Often getting colleagues from other facilities who don't see these floors every day can add valuable insights.



“People rarely slip on a clean, dry floor. Contamination is involved in almost all slip accidents, that is anything that ends up on a floor, e.g. rain water, oil, dust etc.”

## 2. Develop your floor care and maintenance plans

- ▶ Armed with your assessment information evaluate the cleaning options available which meet labour, budgetary and environment restrictions.
- ▶ Hard flooring is split into 6 categories; Resilient (including all vinyl types; composition tile, sheet solid luxury as well as rubber and cork), Stone (marble, granite, slate, travertine, limestone, agglomerate, and terrazzo), Wood (solid as well as laminated and manufactured), Clay and Masonry (includes ceramic, porcelain, brick and terra cotta), Concrete (coated, acid stained, dyed, overlay, polished, integrally coloured and dry shake) and Speciality (including bamboo and cork).
- ▶ Soft flooring mainly consists of carpet; soft pile, woven tiles, etc. and any other surface which has the flex to bounce back.
- ▶ Check your prevention plans. Keep soiltrack to a minimum in high traffic areas Use mats in doorways and make sure they are regularly cleaned. Discuss staff and visitor access requirements with other stakeholders. Do colleagues who carry contaminants as part of their work need access to all areas. Make plenty of regularly emptied waste bins available.



- ▶ Environmental factors to be considered include the building's purpose; Retail outlets, educational facilities and commercial offices all have times when traffic is particularly high and require cleaning schedules that take this into account. Healthcare facilities have particularly high sanitary requirements as well the need to keep noise levels to a minimum. Airports, government and military buildings have to incorporate higher level security measures which may delay or inhibit cleaning routines. Industrial and manufacturing facilities have a variety of heavy soiling requiring specialist cleaning methods within high traffic areas.

## 3. Invest in Staff Training

- ▶ Staff knowledge and training or the lack of, is often one of the biggest causes of substandard floor care routines. Up to date knowledge is key, not only for those in charge of the building environment but for the cleaning technicians using the equipment.
- ▶ The latest advances in floor care are more efficient and simple to use, helping BSCs and in house cleaning staff to do more, in less time, often using fewer chemicals to a higher standard.
- ▶ Ensure your staff have the knowledge to properly identify the correct product for use on a given surface. They need to have an understanding of why the product cleans, how the product can be applied, how the surface itself can be affected, and the quality standards that should be achieved. For example using a product with the wrong PH could damage the flooring surface, irrespective of how well it cleans
- ▶ Engaging with staff through one-on-one meetings, supervisor training, videos, manuals and wall charts and supplier information, gives workers a better understanding of the products, systems and procedures. It is vital that training is an ongoing process - this will help keep standards rising with an constant eye on improvement.

## 4. Get the right Equipment

- ▶ Innovation in equipment is never ending. Spend time deciding which tools and materials will do the job best. Carry out trials involving your staff along the way.
- ▶ Backpack vacuum cleaners benefit both hard and soft flooring of any size and are ideal to use to remove any unwanted debris as a first step before washing or cleaning. Dependent on the size of the area, microfiber mops with a double bucket system are suitable for removing wet or dry soils from hard flooring including those with a floor finish applied.
- ▶ When maintaining soft surfaces, any size area will benefit from the use of oscillating carpet-care equipment and downward-flow carpet fans. Rug Doctor is a walk behind specialist carpet cleaning machine which gives thorough cleaning & drying in one pass. The Duplex Floor Cleaning Machine can be used on both hard and soft floors, steaming, scrubbing and drying in a single pass.
- ▶ Dry dusting ahead of mopping has been proven to be very effective in overall cleaning performance. There is a trend towards swapping mopping to mechanical cleaning within healthcare as machines are able to scrub floors and dry surfaces in one go. A sanitation study published in Applied Microbiology in 1971 which focused on wet mopping methods found a “massive spread of bacterial contamination throughout the hospital by the wet-mopping techniques in use”. Improvements in technology has improved safety for patients as floors are not left slippery and much more hygienic.
- ▶ However the use of mops is recommended in restaurants and other hospitality facilities for quick-spillage or moisture clear-ups in building entrances and kitchen areas. Microfiber flat mops are the most efficient and effective floor cleaning mop head when combined with a double bucket system. Disposable flat mops can be used in critical hygiene areas or where re-use is difficult.

“In 2015 Europe's businesses spent collectively more than £21 billion on rental equipment, a significant proportion of which is made-up by cleaning equipment hire”



## 5. Use the right products

- ▶ Product selection can have significant impacts on the overall performance of your floor cleaning regimes.
- ▶ Firstly selecting the right product for the right surface is essential and neglect in planning this properly can not only lead to ineffective cleaning but can also cause secondary problems such as increased risk of slips and trips.
- ▶ Cost is often a major driver in product selection however it may be more effective to evaluate products on an overall “value” basis.
- ▶ Some products may be less costly but less effective requiring staff to take longer on the task. As labour costs are a far more significant part of overall budgets, the effect of using ineffective products can have an exponential effect on overall expenditure

- ▶ Some products are difficult to dispense leading to persistent overuse, consequently wiping out any cost benefit.
- ▶ A good product supplier will be able to advise on exactly the best products to achieve the results in terms of budget control, cleaning performance, high cleaning standards, sustainability and regulatory compliance. Choose a supplier who can demonstrate expertise across all these key areas and can assist with staff training.



91% of all facilities management organisations have 10 or less employees





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