



Cleaning bathroom floors in guestrooms ... are microfiber mops the answer?

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In last issue's How Do You Do It? column, readers were asked the various means by which their room attendants cleaned guest bathrooms. Not surprisingly, the vast majority of the respondents indicated that it was standard practice for their housekeepers to get on their hands and knees and use a clean rag with disinfectant to wipe down the flooring surface.

Time to try again

Barbara Feiler, a housekeeping assistant from Milwaukee, shared her experiences while working at and managing the housekeeping departments at six different hotels. "Most hotels use a two-step process. First, the room attendants are asked to sweep the hair out of the bathroom with a broom. Next, they are asked to get down on their hands and knees and wash the floor with a rag and a neutral cleaner. This did not work for every room attendant. Some refused to get on their hands and knees and, instead, placed a wet rag flat on the bathroom floor and used their foot and the rag as a mop. This was not effective as the housekeepers were not able to reach the entire bathroom floor with this technique. Others have tried using a small mop with a replaceable mop head. This did not work either, because the mops seemed to collect hair and would rust out very quickly, as they were soaking in a pail filled with water and neutral cleaner all night."

Hand and knees

According to Steven Tramp, general manager of the Best Western Chieftain Inn in Wenatchee, Wash., "Our housekeepers (some of them using knee pads) get on their hands and knees and scrub the floors with Eco-Lab hard surface cleaner and a rag, backing out the door as they go."

Joseph Scrivani, manager of the Super 8 motel in Niagara Falls, N.Y., reaffirmed Tramp's strategy, adding, "Don't even let me see the housekeepers with a bucket and mop for guest bathrooms; such a technique is not only unsanitary for the guests, but a potential hazard for both employee and the guestroom."

Indeed this is true. With a laundry bag for soiled guestroom linens on one end and a canvas bag to hold trash from guestrooms on the other, most conventional housekeeping carts are not equipped to hold either a pail of water or a typical 60" long mop. Thus, a housekeeper would be forced to carry or roll a water-filled bucket possibly long distances down carpeted hallways. This invites the opportunity for spills on expensive carpeting, scrapes and nicks on the baseboards and walls of halls and near the entrances of guest bathrooms, or the possibility of a strained employee back due to heavy lifting. More disconcerting would be the realization that housekeepers will not change out the bucket's water and cleaning solution after mopping each bathroom floor, thus providing the opportunity for possible cross-contamination between guestrooms.

A unique improvisation

However, Feiler may have hit on a potential remedy for cleaning bathroom floors. She recommends using a combination of a broom and a rag. The rag has a slit like a buttonhole on one side. The room attendant slides the rag onto the broom handle. The room attendant holds the rag along the handle as she is sweeping the floor. When done sweeping, she sprays the floor with neutral cleaner. Then, she moves the rag to the bottom of the broom and mops the floor with the rag in a flat position, using the bristle end of the broom for leverage. The rag must be large enough so that it extends beyond the bristles of the broom. This technique saves employees from the pain of climbing up from the floor sixteen times a day and from getting holes in the knees of their pants!

Doug Scouten, one of TRC's floor-care experts and director of product development for Cleanfix Cleaning Systems, Inc., in Wyckoff, N.J., suggests that Barbara Feiler may have hit onto something. "Essentially, Ms. Feiler's improvisation performs many of the same functions of today's new line of microfiber mops."

Microfiber mops

Microfiber mops are lightweight, easy to use, and can reduce the time and energy spent maintaining all types of flooring surfaces. Each microfiber cloth is comprised of thousands of synthetic split fiber yarns that are smaller in diameter than a typical human hair and can hold 10 times their own weight. The need for presweeping is virtually eliminated as hair, dust, and loose dirt are gathered by the finely woven cloth which is attached to the end of an aluminum telescoping pole. If needed, chemical cleaners may be sprayed on the floor or the mop head prior to using. The microfiber cloths, which may be rewashed for several uses, are typically held into place by spring loaded hinges, pins, or even Velcro fasteners, allowing housekeepers to quickly change out soiled microfiber cloths for clean ones.

Scouten adds that many commercial housekeeping managers are initially set aback by what appears to be high acquisition costs. Both wet and dry microfiber cloths for mop heads start at about \$6 apiece. However, characteristically these commercial-grade cloths may be washed and reused hundreds of times, making the long-term costs savings realizable. ✧

Read more about it:

- Read TRC's article "Disposable mop cloths" from Vol. 11, No. 2, Pg. 13.

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