



## Ask Gail

by William D. Frye, Ph.D., CHE

### Three techniques for removing tar and gum from hotel carpets

Another great article from *The Rooms Chronicle*® the #1 journal for hotel rooms management! \*\*\*Important notice: This article may not be reproduced without permission of the publisher or the author.\*\*\* College of Hospitality and Tourism Management, Niagara University, P.O. Box 2036, Niagara University, NY 14109-2036. Phone: 866-Read TRC. E-mail: [editor@roomschronicle.com](mailto:editor@roomschronicle.com)

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Dear Gail:

Our hotel has a large number of contractors who temporarily reside on property. They are constantly tracking dirt and debris onto the carpets throughout the hotel. Our biggest challenge is removing tar and gum-like substances from the carpeting without damaging them. Do you have any solutions?

Alice T.  
Mobile, AL

Dear Alice,

First, if you have not already done so, I would recommend placing walk-off mats both outside and immediately inside each entrance to the hotel to catch loose dirt and debris before it becomes imbedded in the hotel carpeting. Once imbedded in the carpeting, it is difficult to retrieve 100% of the debris through vacuuming. More than likely, your housekeeping team will need to shampoo and extract the carpets at more frequent intervals to preserve the use life of the carpet and avoid premature fiber breakdown.

As for removing tar and gum from carpets, there are a couple of techniques that have been employed by professional cleaners. I know it sounds crazy, but one remedy involves placing a dollop of creamy peanut butter on the gum spot and stirring it into the gum with a spoon or wooden Popsicle stick. Let it sit for ten minutes then use the spoon or stick to scrape it off the carpet. Use a clean wet rag to blot and wipe up any remaining residue. Finally, wash and extract the spot with an attachment hose.

Another technique for removing sticky gum is to apply cold temperature and then scrape. Place a handful of ice cubes in a plastic bag and place the bag directly on the gum spot. Wait ten minutes for the gum to solidify and then use a flat utility knife or other metal edge implement to scrape the hardened gum from the carpet.

One last remedy, which works especially well on tar, but also gum, involves using the lubricant WD-40. While the actual ingredients of WD-40 is kept a trade secret, the manufacturer attests that it does not contain silicone, kerosene, water, wax, graphite, chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), or any known cancer-causing agents, but it does remove tar and other sticky adhesives from nearly any surface. Spray a liberal amount of WD-40 on a clean cloth and blot the top of the tar or gum surface. Repeat as necessary using a clean swatch of cloth each time. The WD-40 will break down the tar or gum and transfer it onto the blotting cloth without harming the carpet. After the tar or gum is removed, shampoo and extract the affected carpet area. ✧

(Readers are encouraged to submit via email their specific questions about hotel operations to Ask Gail at: [editor@roomschronicle.com](mailto:editor@roomschronicle.com)).

