



Risk Management

by Jesse Denton

Quality door mats contribute to a safer and greener indoor environment

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

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The world is a pretty nice place and most people would like to keep it that way. Most everyone realizes that normal commerce is necessary for society to enjoy life in the fashion they desire does result in some pollution of the air, water and earth. Quite honestly, most individuals are not dedicated enough to the cause of a clean environment to ride a bicycle to the grocery store, and in the process let the 17 year old kid, who is in his car and text messaging his buddies and girlfriend, endanger our well being.

However, recently I was pleased to learn about an action and products recommended for years by safety consultants everywhere is now considered “green”. For many years hospitality safety consultants have recommended good entrance mats as a means for preventing guests from going from a wet or snowy sidewalk to a polished floor with wet, muddy or icy shoes. This is a scenario all too common in the hospitality industry, often resulting in slips and falls. The U.S. Green Building Council did not develop the LEED program as a slips and falls prevention program, but it may work out that way.

The U.S. Green Building Council (USGBC) developed the LEED® green building certification program, with two major documents, the *LEED 2009 for Existing Buildings: Operations & Maintenance Rating System* and *LEED 2009 for New Construction and Major Renovations Rating System*. A minimum of 34 points are required to be certified as a “Green Building.” The following is taken from the existing building standard:

IE Q Credit 3.5: Green Cleaning—Indoor Chemical and Pollutant Source Control - 1 point

Intent

To reduce the exposure of building occupants and maintenance personnel to potentially hazardous chemical, biological and particulate contaminants, that adversely affect air quality, human health, building finishes, building systems and the environment.

Requirements

Employ permanent entryway systems (grilles, grates, mats) at least 10 feet long in the primary direction of travel to capture dirt and particulates entering the building at all public entry points, and develop the associated cleaning strategies to maintain those entryway systems as well as exterior walkways. Public entryways that are not in use or serve only as emergency exits are excluded from the requirements, as are private offices.

The graphic below demonstrates why the 10 feet of mat length are needed in order to get the pedestrians’ feet on the mats several times and thus present adequate opportunities for removing soils and moisture from footwear.

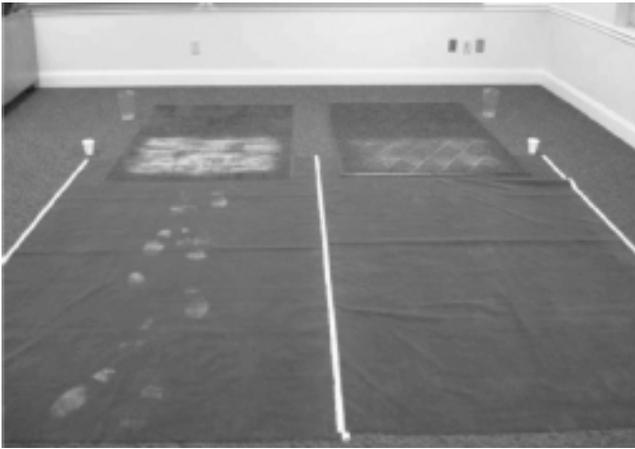
A high quality entrance mat system acts much like a filter on an air conditioner whose job is to stop dust particles from entering the building’s environment. Reduction of dust entering the building also contributes to more efficient HVAC systems. A .042” layer of dust (approximately the thickness of four sheets of printer paper) in the ducts of a HVAC system can decrease efficiency by 21%. Most certainly guests are tracking more than dust inside with them when they enter a hotel. Thus, the need for walk-off mats is clearly evident.

In addition to the increased cost of operating the HVAC at a greatly reduced efficiency, The International Sanitary Supply Association estimates it cost \$600 to remove a pound of dirt from a building. A good system of mats can

USE PROPERLY SIZED ENTRANCE MATS

ENTRANCE	1-3 FEET	3-5 FEET	5-9 FEET	9-15 FEET

Performing additional maintenance in entry areas and other wipe-off regions can reduce the amount of maintenance in other parts of the facility.



prevent many pounds of dirt from entering buildings at its entrance. A “scraper” mat on the exterior of a building scrapes and traps heavy soil such as mud sand and gravel and allows water to drain away freely. Following the scraper type mat with a “scraper-wiper” type mat then scrapes and wipes soil and moisture from foot traffic and captures it below shoe level so it cannot be tracked into the building. Finishing with a “wiper” style mat wipes and absorbs finer dirt, dust and moisture particles, allowing the pedestrian to enter the building with most of the moisture and dirt from their shoes remaining on the mats.

The effectiveness of mats will vary greatly from type to type. The mats obtained from most rental services are typically wiper style mats with little or no capacity to contain moisture during heavy traffic or contamination from liquids or soils. The photo on page 13 shows a comparison where equal amounts of water and sand were deposited on a rental mat and on an Andersen Waterhog, which is a scraper-wiper style mat. Dirt or sand tracked into a building becomes ground into dust which is then picked

up by the air circulation and is deposited on the HVAC filters, duct work, and the furnishings in the building. Stopping dirt before it gets into the interior of the building saves HVAC operating costs, reduces the frequency with which filters need to be changed or cleaned, and saves on general cleaning costs. According to the Carpet & Rug Institute, 80-90% of soil that is tracked inside can be restricted to entry areas, simply by emplacing quality walk-off mats. Without walk-off mats, stepping onto a highly polished floor with water, ice, snow, or mud on the shoe sole has resulted in many slips with resultant fall, strains, sprains, damaged laptops and Blackberry’s, and many other types of injuries. These can be prevented by installing a mat system that meets the LEED standards and also helps maintain a cleaner indoor air environment.

The good news is Green doesn’t have to be ugly. With modern manufacturing technology just about any image that can be printed on an inkjet printer can now be permanently printed or embossed into the entry mats in full color, including a hotel brand’s logo. Safe, green and a nice looking, sometimes you can have it all. ✧

(Jesse Denton is an independent loss prevention consultant based in Atlanta, GA. He possesses over 40 years of experience, the last 22 years with major hotel and insurance companies in the hospitality industry. Jesse was honored in February 2009 by HospitalityLawyer.com with the Hospitality Loss Prevention Lifetime Achievement award. He may be reached via e-mail at: jldentonjr@bellsouth.net.)