

# PROTECTION, CARE & MAINTENANCE

## PART I

### Educating the Customer

Unlike most other floor coverings, wood floors are a long-term investment that, when properly maintained, will last for the lifetime of the structure in which they are installed. Creating realistic expectations and educating the customer on wood floor maintenance up front, before the flooring project begins, is critical to the long-term performance of the wood floor.

Educating the customer includes:

- A. Explanation of proper maintenance, both preventative and routine.
  1. Preventative maintenance includes use of items such as floor protectors and throw rugs.
  2. Routine maintenance includes use of the proper cleaning products, and regular maintenance coats.
- B. Provide the customer with information about which cleaning product they should use on their wood floors. The end-user should be made aware that improper cleaning products can damage floor coatings, can cause adhesion problems with future maintenance coats, and may void manufacturer and labor warranties.
- C. Explain how temperature and relative humidity affect wood floor performance. The end-user should be made aware that temperature and relative humidity are often a part of the warranty of their flooring.

## PART II

### Protection

- A. Post-installation
  1. After installation, if you choose to protectively cover the floor, cover the floor completely. Some species are light-sensitive and uncovered areas may change color.
  2. Covering a glue-down application may not allow some adhesives to properly cure. Follow the flooring and adhesive manufacturers' recommendations.
  3. Use a covering material with a vapor permeance (perm rating) of no less than 1 perm (Class III vapor retarder).
- 4. Any covering should be taped, using a low-adhesion tape, to base or shoe mouldings. Do not tape to finished flooring. When taping paper or sheets together, tape them to each other, not to the floor.
- 5. Do not allow the floor covering to sit on the installed floor for an extended period of time.

#### B. Rugs

1. Use breathable throw rugs both inside and outside the doorways to help prevent grit, salt, chemicals, sand, moisture, and other debris from being tracked onto wood floors. Do not use non-breathable floor coverings or floor protectors on wood floors.
2. Rugs should regularly be shaken out, cleaned, and thoroughly dried, before being placed onto a wood floor.
3. Unless otherwise defined by the finish manufacturer, area rugs should not be placed on a newly finished wood floor for a minimum of seven days after the final coat of finish has been applied.
4. Take special precautions with special nonskid pads that are frequently placed under area rugs. Some of these pads may imprint their pattern (surface impressions) onto the finish and/or wood floor. (Natural fiber pads may not transfer as much as some synthetic pads.)
5. Be aware that area rugs cover the wood floor, protecting it from UV/sun exposure, which results in color differences in the wood floor.

#### C. General protection

1. Put fabric-faced glides under the legs of furniture to prevent scuffing and scratching. Periodically check these floor protectors for embedded soil and replace as necessary.
2. Avoid walking on wood floors with cleats, sports shoes, and high heels.
3. Keep pet claws trimmed and in good repair.
4. Do not slide heavy furniture across wood flooring. It is best to pick up the furniture completely and place it where it needs to be.
5. When moving appliances (refrigerators, stoves, etc.), use safety glides. On newly finished floors, wait a minimum of three days before replacing appliances.

## PART III Care and Cleaning

- A. Establish a cleaning regimen and incorporate floor cleaning into the facility's cleaning routine.
  1. Dry sweep wood floors frequently (daily) to remove fine and large particles from the floor's surface. Use a high-quality dry dusting mop with disposable or washable cloths that removes the dirt from the surface. Particles have the potential to be ground into floors potentially causing damage to a floor's finish. Fine dirt particles when introduced to moisture can turn into a film that dulls the look of the wood floor.
  2. Only use vacuum cleaners that have a setting for hard-surfaces. Turn off the carpet setting (beater/bar brush) on vacuum cleaners when present.
  3. If spills occur, wipe them up immediately to prevent damage caused by standing liquid.
  4. Damp mop floors regularly (weekly) to keep wood floors looking their best.
    - a. The mop should be slightly moistened and well-wrung out, ensuring the amount of moisture left on the floor surface is minimal.
    - b. When using spray mops, use only high-quality spray mops that provide greater control over the amount of solution that is applied, and that come with super-absorbent, disposable or washable pads that remove the cleaning solution and soil from the floor's surface.
- B. Consult the flooring or finish manufacturer's recommendations for general maintenance practices and which cleaning products to use.
- C. Wood floor finishes such as natural oils or waxes require extra precautions. Follow the additional instructions as provided by the flooring and/or finish manufacturers.
- D. When the flooring or finish manufacturer is unknown, a wood flooring professional should be able to identify the type of finish on the floor and recommend an appropriate wood floor cleaning product.
- E. It is important to maintain a consistent environment throughout the year to minimize floor movement. Use of a humidifier throughout the winter/dry months and/or dehumidifier in the summer/humid months to help keep wood from gaining or losing moisture.
- F. When the floor loses its luster, it's time for a maintenance coat.

## PART IV Maintenance

- A. Factory-finished wood floors
  1. Using a non-recommended cleaning product to clean the floor may ruin the intended appearance of the finish, and it may also cause finish adhesion problems when it is time for the floor to be recoated. Excessive use of any wood floor cleaners can damage the wood floor. Only use cleaners as recommended by the flooring manufacturer.
- B. Site-finished wood floors
  1. Using a non-recommended cleaning product to clean the floor may ruin the intended appearance of the finish, and it may also cause finish adhesion problems when it is time for the floor to be recoated. Excessive use of any wood floor cleaners can damage the wood floor. Only use cleaners as recommended by the finish manufacturer.
- C. Oiled floors
  1. Many natural oil finish manufacturers recommend a specific maintenance routine of using oils and soaps on a regular basis. Failure to follow specific maintenance procedures will result in a finish that will not last as intended.
  2. The oil finish may periodically need to be reapplied. There are many different types of oil finishes and each has a specific maintenance program.
  3. On oiled floors, never use traditional wood floor cleaners, as they can damage the oil finish.
- D. Waxed floors
  1. Rebuffing existing wax finish can revitalize most dull waxed floors. Application of new wax may be necessary periodically. Avoid wax buildup under furniture and other light traffic areas by applying wax in these spots every other waxing session.
  2. On waxed floors, never use water-based cleaners, as they can cause water spots.
- E. Non-urethane coated acrylic impregnated floors
  1. For white/bleached acrylic enhanced products, always use an untreated mop. Never use water or petroleum-based products. The floor should be buffed with a low-speed buffer and a recommended product specifically for white/bleached floors. More maintenance will be required for white/bleached floors.
  2. Some flooring manufacturers recommend that floors that have become dull can be lightly abraded, and then a recommended conditioning product should be used.

3. Follow the manufacturer's directions for spot-cleaning stubborn stains. Methods may include spot-sanding or lightly abrading, and then applying the recommended cleaner and conditioner, or using mineral spirits or hydrogen peroxide and a hand-sized piece of synthetic pad to remove the stain.
  4. Note that recoating these types of floors with a urethane will typically void any manufacturer's warranty.
- F. Sports floors
1. Sports floors from basketball to aerobics studios usually take a beating from heavy daily use. Specific recommendations for sports floors are available from the Maple Flooring Manufacturers Association (MFMA): [www.maplefloor.org](http://www.maplefloor.org).
  2. General MFMA maintenance guidelines include the following:
    - a. Dry mop the floor daily with a properly treated dust mop. Floors with especially heavy use should be swept up to three times per day.
    - b. Use walk-off mats at all doorways.
    - c. Wipe up spills or any other moisture on the floor immediately.
    - d. Remove heel marks/scuffs using a floor finish manufacturer's approved wood floor cleaner applied with a soft cloth or dust mop.
    - e. Do not use household cleaning products or products designed for other flooring surfaces, which may damage the floor finish and also may leave the floor sticky or slippery.
    - f. Do not clean the floor with scrubbing machinery or power scrubbers, unless the flooring and finish manufacturer recommends doing so.
    - g. Ensure the HVAC system is working properly, with normal humidity levels and temperatures. Indoor relative humidity should be maintained between 30-50% and a temperature between 60-80°F year-round.
    - h. Do not shut down the HVAC system for prolonged periods of time.
    - i. Inspect the floor for abnormal shrinkage and swelling. During the summer months/humid seasons, carefully monitor all exterior doors and windows for leaks.
    - j. Remove debris from expansion voids within the flooring system.

## PART V

### What Not to Use

- A. Do not use sheet vinyl or tile floor care products on wood floors.
- B. Do not use self-polishing acrylic waxes, which add a film to the floor surface. These products can cause flooring to become slippery, scuff, and appear dull quickly, unless otherwise recommended by the finish or flooring manufacturer.
- C. Do not use cleaning products that claim to restore, rejuvenate, add-shine, polish, or renovate the wood floor, unless otherwise recommended by the finish or flooring manufacturer.
- D. Do not use household wet dusting products to clean wood flooring, unless otherwise recommended by the finish or flooring manufacturer.
- E. Never use wax on non-waxed surface finishes.
- F. Do not use petroleum-based cleaners on waterborne finishes.
- G. Do not use wood floor cleaning products designed for film finishes on natural oiled finishes.
- H. Do not use oil soaps on urethane or film-forming finishes, unless otherwise recommended by the finish or flooring manufacturer.
- I. Do not use vinegar on wood floor finishes. Vinegar is acidic and will degrade the floor finish.
- J. Do not use a traditional mop and bucket that has a potential to apply too much moisture to the wood floor. Standing water will result in cracks, splits, cupping, warping, degradation of the finish, and can leave a discoloring and sometimes sticky residue.
- K. Do not use steam-cleaners on wood floors. Water in a vapor form will penetrate the wood fibers and cause irreversible damage to the wood flooring and the finish.