

Rental Services Can Maximize Floor-Mat Benefits

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What do safety, health, productivity and floor-cleaning schedules have in common? All of these aspects of your plant can be improved by making optimal use of modern floor-mat options. And mats available from textile service companies offer customization options and features that surpass those you're likely to find in a standard industrial catalog. Companies that rent, sell and lease reusable textile products, including floor mats, do more than provide and clean mats. They use their knowledge of today's textiles to help clients select mats that best meet the needs of all areas in their facilities.

When considering mat placement, safety may be one of your top concerns. One insurance-company estimate places the average cost of a slip-and-fall accident at more than \$12,000. And according to the U.S. Department of Labor, slips, trips and falls comprise the majority of general industry accidents.

Whether liquid comes into an entrance area in the form of rain, or results from a spill or work process, it presents a slip hazard. For this reason, matting at all entrance areas should be a priority. A textile service provider will work with you to determine your exact needs, including the length and type of mat that would be best for your work environment. These include numerous materials and designs. Inside a facility, in areas prone to spills, for example, splashes or liquid overflow may require flow-through matting to control wetness. Alternatively, water-dam mats with borders that hold as much as 1.5 gal. of water per sq. yd. are available, made with anti-static polypropylene fabric that dries quickly and is fade- and rot-resistant.

For areas with less frequent moisture problems, such as the smooth surface floors of production or office areas or vending rooms, suction-backed mats are ideal. Substantial walking and wheeled-equipment traffic will not move or roll these mats.

In addition to absorbing moisture, mats are also designed to prevent fatigue among workers who must stand for long periods of time. These are increasingly popular for preventing accidents and enhancing employee morale and productivity. For work

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areas, anti-fatigue mats, resistant to chemicals, grease, petroleum and animal fat are available, as are mats with slip-resistant surfaces and beveled edges, which are required by the Americans with Disabilities Act. Anti-static features, provided via high-twist nylon yarns, are engineered to dissipate static and allow for safe use near sensitive electronic equipment.

Modern mat options also include visual factors that can enhance their effectiveness. At plant entrances and in production areas, for example, mats with attention-grabbing messages can provide an easy means of reminding employees about the importance of safety and other issues. Customized safety statements and a variety of graphic designs are available. Anti-fatigue and scraper mats for use in production and other work areas are available with OSHA border colors of black, safety green, caution yellow, warning orange and danger red, to remind employees when they are approaching, entering or leaving hazardous locations.

During winter conditions, it is estimated that 1,500 people entering a facility can bring in as much as 15 lbs. of dirt, mostly on shoes. Many facilities purchase entry mats to help trap dirt as people enter a building. However, while any mat will trap some dirt, standard vinyl mats are engineered to wear out. Under harsh traffic conditions, mats that are not highly durable will have to be replaced.

To enhance durability, textile service providers typically use mats made of Nitrile rubber, a high-grade rubber compound engineered to be long-lasting and to resist curling and cracking under all climactic conditions. Deeper, thicker pile above the mat's rubber base retains its thickness even with frequent industrial laundering. The pile traps larger quantities of soil, dust and water in the body of the mat, keeping the surface looking clean. Specialized mat features can also help enhance cleanliness.

For example, textiles offering resistance to oil, grease and chemicals that may be on shoes as people enter a building can be used to reduce the risk of slippery surfaces and stained flooring. When workers must frequently walk through dirt, dust or mud before entering a facility, outdoor scraper mats can complement indoor entry mats by removing dirt from shoes before people enter the building. If outdoor conditions are frequently wet, scraper mats with strong liquid entrapment capabilities also available.

Also, anti-microbial rubber compounds can inhibit growth of bacteria and molds on the surface of a mat, helping to reduce microbes entering a facility even before employees reach preparation areas. This is particularly important in food-processing, food-service and healthcare industries.

Regardless of function, all mats eventually fill with dirt and debris and require cleaning. A dirty mat is not working effectively and is probably making a poor first impression on visitors. Textile service providers typically clean mats on routine schedules determined by client needs, which often are based on amount and type of foot traffic impacting a mat and the time of year. This can be a cost-effective solution to grit-control for plant managers concerned about mats that frequently get dirty, the costs of mat replacement, and the need for plant janitorial workers to

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spend time cleaning facility-owned mats. Textile service companies also offer a wide range of mat sizes and colors in mat-rental packages, and can customize colors as well as shape.

For every part of a plant facility, modern mats can address specific cleanliness and safety issues. Use of a mat service program can be a cost-effective component of a textile service program, which can also include uniforms, restroom products and shop towels.

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