

\$AFER INVESTMENTS

While many injuries occur, at least in part, due to human error, we can help to minimize those risks by investing in technology that makes hazardous tasks safer for the employee. One of the more dangerous tasks we ask of our facilities staff is the stripping and waxing of floors. As we get closer to summer, this task will be repeated in hundreds of our schools, exposing the facilities crew to risks such as slips and falls, corrosive chemical burns, back injuries and strains. This work also exposes other employees and visitors to the school to slips and falls.

Traditionally, this type of work involves using corrosive-based floor strippers that are purchased in concentrated form (making handling more hazardous), which are mixed and utilized to remove built-up wax and finishes off the floors so that they may be cleaned and resealed. In many districts, this is at least a three person task. We have had numerous injuries to our custodial staff while performing these jobs. The stripper is very slippery and even with slip-resistant footwear, it is still a treacherous job. Circular floor scrubbers can be difficult to control and increase risks of falls, back injuries and muscle strains.

What if there was a way you could virtually eliminate the use of corrosive floor stripper, saving money and reducing risk to the employees? What if you could save manpower and increase productivity, making better use of your personnel resources, especially during the hectic summer cleaning months? What if you could dry the floors faster, thereby minimizing slip and fall risks? What if you could do all of this by simply investing in technology that already exists and would pay for itself ten times over by reducing the risks of a serious slip and fall claim?

Several of our districts are already using this technology and rave about the safety and efficiency. Water-based floor scrubbers are sold by a variety of commercial equipment suppliers. Instead of using hazardous corrosive strippers, they employ a special stripping pad that combines with water to strip the old wax off the surface and vacuums up the residual water to minimize drying time. The unique pads and motion of the mechanical arms combine to strip the floor effectively without the use of chemicals, making it safer for the employees and anyone in the building. The higher-end walk behind models require no strenuous side to side body motion and are one-person operations, freeing up limited staff for other duties.

A similar technology exists for polishing terrazzo floors without the need for waxing. Buffers using special burnishing pads can polish the surface of the terrazzo, leaving the trademark high gloss shine, without the slip risks associated with waxing. Prudent risk management includes evaluating current work practices and introducing new technology to create a safer environment.

Please consider discussing these options with your Facilities Manager. They can arrange to have a company perform an in-house demonstration of these machines so you can visualize the results firsthand.

**If you have any questions or need assistance
please contact the JIF Safety Coordinator**



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