

Natural Stone, Ceramic & Concrete Flooring

Man-made and natural hard flooring presents some maintenance challenges not found in resilient types. Concrete is probably the most commonly used hard floor surface with terrazzo being the most common in public buildings. Marble is being used less over the years, but natural stone, clay and ceramic tile are increasingly popular members of the hard floor surface family as well.

CONCRETE FLOORS: In today's environment, untreated concrete flooring is not only unattractive in appearance and very drab, it is also a source for dust which permeates any equipment or products in the vicinity. If the floor has not been sealed, dirt, oil and grease can easily penetrate and discolor the surface. Before applying any seal it is extremely important that the floor is cleaned, etched if needed, and dry. Choosing a sealer to be used for concrete will depend on your needs and the environment in the facility.

TERRAZZO FLOORS: Terrazzo floors is one of the oldest forms of flooring dating back more than 3,000 years in the Mediterranean. An unsealed terrazzo floor is not resistant to acids due to the high content of marble and some harsh alkaline solutions may also do considerable damage. According to industry standards the best seal for terrazzo will be water-based and light in color.

CLAY AND CERAMIC TILE FLOORS: Any types of floor tile having a basic clay composition are classed as clay tiles. This ranges from cheap quarry to the more expensive vitreous or semi-vitreous tiles. They are either glazed with a glossy surface fused upon their face, or unglazed with a duller appearance.

Being comparatively easy to keep clean, clay tile requires little in the way of routine maintenance. Most floors are maintained with a neutral detergent such as Sunbeam.

Because clay and ceramic tile is often use in washrooms and showers, one of the most common cleaning problems is the removal of hard water deposits and soap scum floors. Both of the deposits are alkaline and with the lime content, they cannot be removed with regular cleaners. A mild acid solution is mopped onto the floor then allowed to dwell for a few minutes. The floor is scrubbed, if necessary, with a less aggressive floor pad of nylon or polyester (brushes work best for grouted floors). The acid solution should then be thoroughly rinsed from the floor with clean water.

BRICK FLOORING: Brick flooring usually consists of clay, either vitreous or semi- vitreous. Sand, lime, and concrete bricks can also be used for flooring. Normal maintenance should be carried out by sweeping, followed by washing with a solution of neutral floor cleaner. Sealing is not generally recommended for brick floors. If a sealer is desired for the grout, two coats of a water-based acrylic seal would perform well.

NATURAL STONE FLOORS: The most common types of natural stone flooring are marble, slate and limestone. Others that you may encounter are outlined also in the following section. Generally, it is not necessary to seal natural stone floors. In some circumstances a seal may be desired to protect the cement or grout and occasionally to add gloss to the surface. Many natural stone floors cre ate a maintenance problem by their uneven surface. If the floor has heavy traffic and requires resurfacing on a stringent maintenance schedule, a water-based, acrylic type seal that is water-white in color while possessing non-yellowing characteristics should be selected.

SLATE: Found both indoors and out, slate can be a problem since it contains high clay content and will often flake, and easily develop efflorescence. This is especially true in wet areas. Slate is best treated with a high quality finish.

SANDSTONE: Sandstone is a sedimentary material that consists of sand crystals cemented together with natural clays. Sandstone is very porous and should be sealed with a penetrating seal.

QUARTZITE: While it is becoming more popular, Quartzite is still a rare flooring material. It is classified as sandstone and should be treated in a similar manner

SHELLSTONE or COQUINA: Shell stone or Coquina is a sedimentary, very porous material consisting of limestone made up of broken fragments of shells and corals. Its shell or cord fragments easily identify it. This is a very abrasive stone and should not be resurfaced.

FLAGSTONE / BLUESTONE: Flagstone is a term generally applied to almost all stone material cut into thin, irregular shapes. Found extensively on sidewalks, foyer entrances and pool decks, Flagstone should be cleaned and sealed with a penetrating sealer.

ONYX: Onyx is a very expensive type of marble that can be found on tabletops and small pieces of furniture. It can be treated just like marble while possessing a high shine.

SOAPSTONE: Soapstone is one of the softest materials composed of the mineral talc. For this reason it makes an excellent carving material and can be found on fireplace surrounds and hearths. It is treated like marble.

