Floor Finish Application

By Valan R. Martini

The proper application of floor finish is 99 percent science and 1 percent art. Following correct procedures carefully car guarantee success, assuming that good quality chemicals and equipment are used.

To prepare for a floor finishing project, direct your crew to remove all objects from the area to be finished and place saf and barriers around it. Where possible, have them lock doors leading to the area to prevent people from entering until th completed. Devise a work plan that allows your crew to avoid crossing newly finished areas for as long as possible.

Have your staff use duct tape and plastic sheeting to create "stop lines" to prevent finish from reaching carpeting or othe that isn't going to be finished. Follow tile joint lines to create invisible "splicing" where floors meet.

Place clean floor mats bottom side up between the work area and other flooring, so that technicians may leave the work without tracking wet finish onto floors or carpeting, or tracking soil or lint into the work area when returning.

Safety Before the Start

Ensure that floor technicians have read the material safety data sheets (MSDS) and product labels on each product used. should also know how to operate all equipment used in the finishing process.

Proper employee attire includes clean footwear without treads, to avoid making impressions or soiling newly finished su Easily-removed, crepe-soled shoes are recommended to ensure that no soil or grit is tracked onto newly finished floors.

Durable, waterproof gloves are needed for staff members who may handle mop heads or equipment that are covered wit finish. Whenever chemicals are used in a work environment, the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration (requires employers to provide employees with appropriate personal protective equipment (PPE) to protect against any h involved.

Have your crew place chemicals, tools and equipment near the work area, and instruct them to place equipment on floor prevent damage to floors or surfaces not to be finished. If your crew is using a floor finish that requires a sealer, direct t the finish and sealer full strength. Do not dilute either product.

Trash Bag Liner

Before your staff pours the finishing product into a mop bucket, have them place a plastic trash bag in the bucket -- so t actually pouring the finish into the trash bag -- to ensure that nothing contaminates the finish. Provide them with new, l FINISH mop heads (to avoid contamination from other chemicals) and direct your crew to follow the manufacturer's ins for proper application of the finish.

A technician should submerge the mop in the finish and agitate lightly for 15 to 20 seconds. Using a side-press wringer, should place the mop head in the wringer far enough to allow the tip of the mop to touch the bottom of the wringer (whi usually about half of the mop head). Do not twist or double over the mop head.

Direct the technician to gently pull the wringer closed -- using only one or two fingers -- to squeeze the excess finish fro mop. Remove enough finish from the mop head to ensure that finish doesn't drip or coat the floor unevenly.

The mop head should be lifted clear of the wringer and swung smoothly away from the bucket. With practice, your crew that each mop head will fan out to give a smooth, even application. Have your crew apply the finish with a figure-eight overlapping 2 or 3 inches onto the previous path.

Figure-Eight Application

This pattern creates an even, smooth flow that prevents mop strands from doubling back and leaving a swirl pattern in th
Have the technician keep the mop head trailing straight and evenly behind the mop handle.

Direct your crew to begin the finish application no more than 15 feet from the bucket, laying the finish in an inverted "U
Have them fill the space within the "U" before moving the bucket to a new area. Keep the crew close to the bucket wher
finish to avoid having the finish dry too rapidly or
spread unevenly.

If dirt or other contaminants touch the mop head or get into the finish bucket, remove the contaminants immediately. Yo
may need to replace the mop head or the finish.

Instruct your crew to measure the finishing product so that they have minimal amounts of unused finish at the end of the
Never pour unused finish back into the original container. Unused product, when poured into the original container, will
contaminate and ruin the product within a short time.

How Much, How Dry?

Generally, 1 gallon of finish will cover about 1,800 to 2,000 sq. ft. of vinyl-composite tile flooring with one coat of finis
Coverage varies according to the porosity of the floor material. However, if you're crew finds that they are covering less
they expected, they may be laying the finish too thickly, which may reduce the gloss and prolong drying time. More cov
expected may mean that they are laying the finish too thinly, which may cause streaking and a dull appearance.

Most finishes will dry within 20 minutes and may then be recoated. Any finish must dry completely before recoating. O
approximate test for dryness is to brush the back of your hand lightly across the floor. If you feel the finish catch or pull
on the back of your hand then the finish is still too
wet to recoat.

Have your crew test the floor for dryness in several areas before proceeding with the next coat. Drying conditions will v
according to humidity, air flow, temperature and the thickness of the finish coating.

Forced drying of a finish may damage the appearance. If fans or blowers are used, instruct your crew to blow the air ind
across the floor surface, instead of directly on the floor. Direct air currents on wet finish may cause the finish to dry too
inhibiting leveling and gloss. When refinishing a freshly stripped floor, five coats of finish is recommended, but always
the manufacturers' label instructions.

Project Cycling

Always apply finish to a clean floor. The ideal time to refinish a floor is after it has been stripped. If possible, plan a fini
when planning a stripping job, to be completed in one continuous procedure.

Planning a time-consuming procedure like continuous floor stripping and finishing can be difficult in large facilities and
operations, such as hospitals. If your operation doesn't allow you to plan for the entire procedure at once, have your crew
or four coats of finish -- allowing ample
time for drying between coats -- and then later apply additional coats as needed. If possible, break down the project into
which can be done completely at one time without interruption.

Never allow traffic on a floor that has less than two coats. The finish will be too porous and will readily accept soil and
will force your crew to start all over again, including restripping.

When the floor finishing procedure is complete, the floor should be ready for traffic 20 minutes after the last coat dries c
Some durable floor finishes may seem to have less gloss immediately after application, but can be buffed to a glossy app
using ultra-high speed buffing equipment. Wait approximately 24 hours before burnishing a newly finished floor. Prop
maintenance practices will extend the life of a finish and its glossy appearance

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