

Floor Pads Shine Under Pressure

They can take the heat -- and they're aggressive.

By Darin Hargraves

Developed to replace polish brushes used on low-speed equipment, floor pads give increased flexibility to a floor maintenance program.

If one pad doesn't produce the results needed, simply try a different color pad. Light-colored pads are least aggressive and are usually used for polishing. The most aggressive pad is black and is used in stripping procedures.

A pad's aggressiveness is related to the number of resin "rocks" on the pad's surface and the type of synthetic or natural fiber used in the pad's construction. Manufacturers dip pads in (or brush pads with) a resin solution to hold the fibers together. When the resin dries, it leaves small resin "rocks" on the fibers.

Pig's hair is a natural fiber used in pad manufacture that is popular with many floor care professionals. Rubberized pads are also available for high-speed burnishing.

Three variables affect the way a buffer performs: downward pad pressure, pad contact area and pad speed. These variables are best described by heat-generating potential. For example, propane buffers generally produce the greatest heat at 3,000 rpm, with full pad contact at high pad pressures.

Too Fast and Hot

Altering the aggressiveness of the pad can offset deficiencies in pad pressure and pad contact area. Overly aggressive pads may produce the desired heat but may leave circles in the floor finish. Powdering of floor finish is also a characteristic of using an excessively aggressive pad.

Many manufacturers design pads for specific types of equipment, such as propane and battery buffers. Ask your distributor or manufacturer for a recommendation when purchasing floor pads, and be sure to tell them what type of buffing equipment and floor finish your crew uses.

When choosing a pad for a cleaning operation such as automatic scrubbing, the least aggressive floor pad that does a satisfactory job should be used to help prevent damage to the floor shine. Many cleaning chemicals, especially non-neutral cleaners, can temporarily soften floor polish.

Pre-burnish pads for use with propane equipment have become popular where there is light floor soiling. Using these pads can be more time efficient than automatic scrubbing, and they can be used in rotation with automatic scrubbing in some floor maintenance programs.

There are two ways to construct a floor pad. Some manufacturers use a layered design in which pad fibers lie roughly parallel to the floor. Pads that have fibers running vertically can deteriorate 50 percent faster. This is a result of pad wear on the looped ends of the fibers, eroding the pad structurally.

Shake and Brush to Clean

Polishing pads should be cleaned often to eliminate build-up that can scratch the floor polish. Clean pads by removing them from the machine and shaking them in a plastic bag to remove dust and imbedded debris. Pads can also be brushed with a stiff plastic bristle brush.

Cleaning and stripping pads can be cleaned by soaking them in a light stripper solution for five minutes, then brushing them with a stiff brush while rinsing with clear water. Be sure your crew always wears protective clothing when working with stripper solution.

Some manufacturers and distributors provide pad cleaning services which pick up your pads and return them ready-to-use. They may also clean employee uniforms and entrance mats.

Even though a used pad can be cleaned, it doesn't mean that it will always produce the same results as a new pad. Pads begin to lose their resin rocks as the pad is used. Be careful to avoid overusing them.

Floor pads do have their limitations. Uneven floors are best cleaned and stripped with a floor brush on a low-speed machine or automatic scrubber. Ordinarily, uneven floors are maintained with a low-speed program, eliminating the need for high-speed equipment.

Brushes have yet to successfully bridge the gap to high-speed applications. Although some floor care equipment manufacturers are beginning to market high-speed brush machines, most floor care professionals still use pads when using high-speed equipment.

Have your crew test pads to find the best one for the floor care procedures they perform. Finding the best pad for your equipment and floor polish can determine the success your staff has in maintaining good-looking, clean floors.

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