

SURFACE CARE GUIDE

SURFACE BUFF
Your fine surface care and maintenance experts



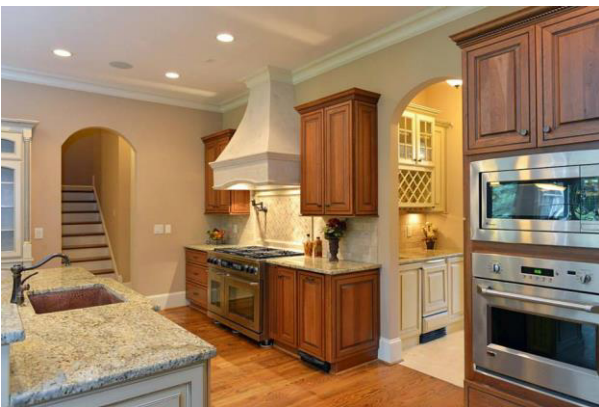


SURFACE CARE GUIDE

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SURFACE BUFF is the premier remodeling, restoration, installation, maintenance, and preservation company for all hard surfaces in the greater Triangle area, we take pride in providing our clients with top-notch service, products, and consultations to help properly maintain and preserve their investments.

At SURFACE BUFF, we specialize in installing, cleaning, repairing, restoring, polishing, honing, grinding, and sealing your fine surfaces using only natural, true, and proven methods that are designed to make your surfaces a work of art. Our goal is to provide our clients with a seamless approach to resolving whatever surface maintenance, installation, or restoration projects they may have with quality and at an affordable cost.



We understand that dirt, grime, stains, etching, hard water stains, wear and tear, wrong cleaning products, and sealant breakdown can all contribute to the degeneration of surfaces. That's why we're here to restore your surfaces and help get you on the right track to keep them looking fantastic without complicating your schedule.

We are proud to be associated with the top-rated contractors in North Carolina. They have an exceptional track record of delivering high-quality workmanship to our clients. They are also known for their strong work ethic, attention to detail, and commitment to customer satisfaction. Whether you need a full home renovation or just want to update your bathroom or kitchen, these contractors have the expertise and experience to get the job done right. So, if you're looking for the best remodeling and tiling services in North Carolina, look no further! We hope you'll consider us for all of your surface care needs. We're confident that you won't be disappointed with the quality of our work and our commitment to providing excellent customer service.



Thank you for taking the time to read this message, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

Our sincerest regards,
The Surface Buff Team
919.341.2873

SURFACE BUFF
Your fine surface care and maintenance experts

Visit us online at www.surfacebuff.com for more details and helpful tips



ESSENTIAL CARE & MAINTENANCE | SURFACE CARE

Many types of surfaces, particularly those made of marble, travertine, limestone, and some slates, have a delicate chemical composition that can interact with wear and tear and cleaning solutions in damaging ways. This is why it's essential to use cleaning products that are specifically formulated for these types of surfaces. Unfortunately, one of the most common reasons for restoration services in both residential and commercial applications is the use of wrong cleaning products. We frequently receive calls from frantic customers who have used the wrong product on their surface and ended up with etch marks or damaged color or finish.

Once you **DO** know what to use, all you have to do is follow some basic guidelines, schedule for routine maintenance and your surfaces will stay beautiful for years and years. *This guide will cover everything from routine maintenance to troubleshooting, even what products to use.*

When you need professional maintenance and cleaning services, call Surface Buff - the only trained and certified surface care experts!

TO THE BASICS

Here are some do's and don'ts for routine preventative measures to keep your surfaces looking their best:

Do use coasters under all drinking glasses, particularly those containing alcohol or citrus juice, to avoid etching.

Don't ever place hot items directly onto any surface, regardless of who sold you on the idea that it's safe. Instead, use trivets, mats, or cooling racks for hot items.

So use place mats under china, silver, or other objects that can scratch a surface, especially softer surfaces such as marble, soapstone, limestone, etc.

Avoid cleaning products unless the label specifies that they are safe for the surface type. The rule of thumb is, if it's safe for marble, it's safe for any surface type. Ideally, you want an alcohol-based, pH-neutral cleaner that does not leave a residue, such as our all-purpose cleaner.

When it comes to spills, some substances can cause damage to surfaces if not dealt with properly. Acidic spills such as juices, wines, vinegar, liquor, tomato sauce, yogurt, salad dressings, perfumes, after shave, soaps, and certain cleaning agents can etch the surface if left unattended. Simply using water can actually make the acids more potent and cause even more damage. To properly clean up these spills, it's important to use a pH neutral cleaner to neutralize the acids.

It's important to clean up spills immediately and avoid rubbing the affected area. Instead, use a clean towel to blot the spill. Avoid using unsafe cleaning methods such as following online tips or using old cleaning methods passed down from grandparents. Surfaces today are manufactured and processed differently, and using outdated cleaning methods or chemicals could actually cause more harm than good.

In most cases, people overcomplicate the cleaning process. Using simple and effective products like GT-1 or MB-5, or Pledge Multi-Surface can be the best solution for cleaning up spills and preventing further damage to surfaces.



Visit us online at www.surfacebuff.com for more details and helpful tips



If a cleaning product is not specifically formulated to clean while NOT interacting with the chemical makeup of the surface, assume it is not safe to be used – period. Ask us for recommendations of products.

FLOORS

INVEST IN QUALITY CLEANING TOOLS

A cleaning chore – any cleaning chore – is never a matter of a cleaning product only. The implements (the cleaning rag, paper towel, scrubbing pad, squeegee, etc.) are important considerations, as well.

A good quality mop is critical to obtaining the best results when mopping our floors. We found that sponge mops and string mops are not the best choice for any surface. A better choice is a closed-loop cotton mop or a microfiber mop.

Always make certain that brushes, mops, rags and buckets if you choose to use a bucket are free from any debris, grit or residue. It is also advisable to use only white or colorfast cloths to avoid color transfer to your surface.

A NOTE ON NEWLY INSTALLED FLOORS

The best thing to have done to a brand-new or recently restored floor is a detailing job by a properly trained maintenance contractor. Detailing means deep-cleaning the entire floor thoroughly, removing any possible residue or film, adhesive and perhaps addressing any minor factory flaws or possible damages left behind by installers.

DO NOT get the surface wet for at least 72 hours after the installation or restoration to allow any sealers to properly cure.



COUNTERTOPS



When it comes to maintaining your kitchen countertops, there are a few things you should keep in mind. Regardless of if your countertop is made of true granite, green marble, quartz, quartzite, Corian, soapstone, or a honed finished stone, you need to remember this important rule: avoid using glass cleaners or water with dish soap. These can be too harsh for the stone and may leave an unsanitary film that can build up over time. Instead, use a specialty cleaner that's formulated for stone surfaces.

Regardless of what type of countertop you have, whether it's quartz, natural stone, Corian, or Formica, it's essential to use an alcohol-based pH neutral cleaner, such as GTI or MB5. You can also use a stone polish spray like Finito once a month to enhance the surface.

Make sure to clean your kitchen countertop regularly, especially near cooking and eating areas. Use a high concentration of cleaner for these areas and diluted water for less demanding situations, such as vanity tops. When cleaning spills, blot them up immediately to prevent scratching and etching. For dried spills, use a pH neutral cleaner and avoid using green or brown scoring pads, which can scratch the surface. Instead, use sponges lined with silvery net or other plastic scoring pads. Spray the cleaning agent and let it sit for a little bit to moisten or soften the soil before scrubbing.

Finally, treat your countertops to a conditioning stone polish like Finito occasionally to brighten up the surface and repel dust. Be sure to follow the label instructions for all cleaning products. Remember, proper maintenance can extend the life of your countertops and keep them looking their best.

NEVER place heavy objects or climb on counters as this can cause significant damage or even break your surface!



VANITY TOPS



It's important to keep your vanity tops clean to maintain their appearance and durability. To do this, use a safe, pH-neutral cleaner that is appropriate for your surface type, such as our GT-1 or MB-5. These cleaners are perfect for hard surfaces and even mirrors!

Avoid using regular glass cleaners on your mirrors when they are placed over natural surface tops. The overspray could spill onto the surface and dry it out or worse yet, etch and damage it. Instead, use a pH-neutral, alcohol-based cleaner. Even if you accidentally over-spray it, nothing bad will happen as this will not damage your natural surface. Rubbing alcohol can also be used to clean mirrors without harming marble.

Never use powder or cream cleansers on your surfaces. Additionally, avoid doing your nails, dyeing your hair, or using any harsh cosmetic chemicals on your surface tops. Wet bottles or cleaning agent bottles should not be placed on the surface as this can lead to etch marks. Even on man-made surfaces, these can often leave rings that may or may not come out.

For maintenance, use the finito spray to keep your tops looking amazing. This preserves the sealer and makes maintenance a much simpler process for you.





SHOWERS & TOILETS

It's important to monitor your shower stalls and check your grout and caulk lines regularly. Address any problems immediately. Avoid using any cleansers that come in a powdery or creamy form, as well as generic soap film removers like Tilex soap scum or X Force Teen soap scum on polished surfaces. Kaboom is an acid-based cleaner that should never be used on any surface. Mildew stain removers such as Tilex mildew stain remover or X14 mildew stain remover should not be used on any polished surface. Self-cleaners like Scrub Free and harsh disinfectants like Lysol or bleach should also be avoided.

To keep your shower stall clean, make sure to clean it daily. Spray the walls and floor of the stall with an appropriate cleaner and squeegee after everyone in the home has taken a shower for the day. Use a soap film remover specifically formulated to be effective at cleaning soap scum and hard mineral deposits without negatively interacting with the chemistry of your surface and grout.

If mildew stains appear on the grout lines of your shower enclosure, clean them with mildew stain remover such as our MB nine, which has been formulated to be safe on all surfaces including natural stone while being very effective in removing mildew and other biological stains.

When it comes to cleaning toilets, avoid using regular toilet bowl cleaners on any other surface, such as natural stone or an area that can etch or discolor easily. These cleaners are highly acidic, and water is the catalyst for acids. Spills can dig holes and cause edge marks and even discolor your surface and grout. Instead, use a non-acidic toilet bowl cleaner. You can use rubbing alcohol or our non-acid toilet bowl cleaner, which is available on our website.

SEALERS

Some surfaces are porous and require a good quality impregnating sealer, such as honed finish limestone or certain granites, especially marble. It is highly recommended to apply a quality impregnating sealer, even though it may not always be necessary for highly polished marble and travertine or polished high-density granites. When in doubt, it doesn't hurt to have it sealed. If it turns out that sealing the stone does prevent some staining, you've saved yourself the cost of a stain removal service.

How many applications of sealer are needed? For some stones that are more porous than others, one application of impregnator sealer may not be enough. But how will you know? On granite that needs sealing, at least two applications are recommended. Very porous granite, sandstone, quartzite, etc. may require three or more applications. When the sealer can no longer be absorbed by the stone, the stone is quickly sealed.



How long will it last? There's no absolute rule of thumb when it comes to the durability of any sealer. Generally speaking, most quality impregnating sealers for the interior will last two to five years or more. Environment plays a big role. Certain surfaces exposed to intense heat or direct sunlight, constant moisture, or a lot of cleaning agents will probably need to be resealed more often.

When is it time to reseat? To find out if your stone or surface is still perfectly sealed, pour some water on it and wait for approximately half an hour. Then wipe it dry. If the surface of the stone did not darken, it means the stone is still perfectly sealed. Be sure to test various areas, especially those that get more use and abuse.

What exactly is a sealer, and what does it do? Contrary to what your perception may be when you hear the word "sealer," most sealers for stone are below-surface products and will not alter in any way, shape, or form the original finish produced by the factory. They will not offer protection to the surface of the stone either. They will only go inside the stone by being absorbed by it, assuming that the stone is porous enough to allow this to happen.

In a way, the sealer clogs the pores of the stone, thus reducing its natural absorbency rate. This will help prevent possible accidental spills of staining agents from being absorbed by the stone. On the other hand, granite, which is more porous than Corian, may stain if not protected with a good quality impregnator stone sealer. Stay away from topical sealers, waxes, coatings, crystallizers, or what some people claim is a permanent sealer because there's no way to permanently seal any surface. That is just a marketing play. Some granites are so porous that no sealer will do a satisfactory job sealing them 100% for an extended amount of time.

Sealers for stones, which are below-surface penetrating type sealers better referred to as impregnates, are designed to do one thing and one thing only: clog the pores of the stone to inhibit staining agents from being absorbed by it. In some instances, weird problems that may appear to be etching on surfaces turn

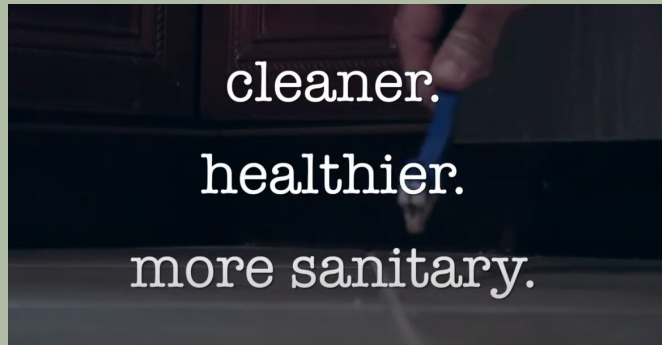
out to be created by residue bad sealer that was left, and haze ended up on the surface, or reacted with substances that may have spilled on it. In these cases, once the sealer is professionally removed, everything is fine.

Note that sometimes marks of corrosion, otherwise known as edge marks that an ascetic substance leaves behind, may look like water stains or when it rings, but they are neither stains nor were they generated by water. The during surface damage has no relation whatsoever to the porosity of the stone, which determines its absorbency but is exclusively related to its chemical makeup.

Special topical treatments are becoming ceiling DIY. Or call on a Pro. Is sealing a job for the homeowner, or should you hire a qualified professional to do it for you? Consider the following pros and cons. You save on labor costs by doing it yourself. However, consider the magnitude of the job and how comfortable you are with the DIY project. Are you prepared to get your hands and knees to seal a floor? Are you willing to apply multiple applications if needed? Are you prepared to do all of the prep work and polishing necessary prior to the sealer? And are you really familiar with the chemical componentry of what sealer is and how to apply it? Has the floor surface been thoroughly and completely cleaned? If not, you take the chance of sealing the dirt and debris and locking it in place, creating more of a mess. Also, keep in mind that sealer does not completely get removed from the surface of the stone, which may cause problems, including a haze on the stone that may develop as the sealer dries completely. But once it's dried on the surface, sealer can be very difficult to remove.

Different sealers perform differently in different environments and on different stones. Hiring a pro to do the job may end up saving you in the end. A pro will know which is the best sealer for the job and will use equipment and techniques that allow them to get the job done efficiently and effectively.

Grout Cleaning & Sealing



Grout is porous. That means it's full of tiny holes and grooves. With everyday use and traffic, food spills, dirt, grime, pet accidents, bacteria, and allergens find their way into these tiny holes

With mopping and scrubbing some of the contaminants are removed, but what you may not know is that one of the main causes of dirty grout is dirty mop water, which can settle into the pores. Professional cleaning removes the contaminants that are trapped deep beneath the porous surface, but it's not as if you're going to hire a professional to clean your floors every week. So, what's the solution? You need to fill those pores so that they're no longer absorbent. In other words, you need to have the grout sealed.

There are two categories of sealers, clear and color sealer. What's the difference? We're glad you asked.

Clear grout sealer waterproofs the holes and grooves giving you time to clean up spills before they settle into the surface and become stains. Clear grout sealer should be reapplied about every six months depending on traffic and usage.

Color sealing, on the other hand, is a complete game changer because it fills the soil, catching nooks and crannies of the grout, and keeping it stain-resistant for years. Plus, your grout may have discolorations such as bleach spots from cleaners, or stains from spills. Even new grout can show different shades of the grout colors

after curing properly. Color sealing resolves these problems and gives your floor a fresh new uniform look. Not only does it resolve the blotchy appearance of grout lines, but you can change the color of your grout to virtually any color you choose, even going from dark to light or vice versa. Your floor will look great. It will stay looking great. Regular cleaning will be so much easier because contaminants stay on the surface and are easily removed with a quick sweep and damp mop. There is one caveat, however. Be selective when choosing a company to color seal your grout. Some less-than-reputable companies advertise grout color sealing but use what basically amounts to house paint, which will begin to peel within a short time and doesn't have the important properties that a quality color sealer should have. A good quality color sealer will last years and years and has constant acting, mildicides and fungicides so your floors and showers remain cleaner, healthier and more sanitary.

IS IT REALLY A STAIN?



A true stain is always darker than the stained material. If it appears as a light color, it is not a stain but rather a mark of corrosion. This is also known as etching, which is made by an acid, or a bleaching mark made by a strong based alkali. In other words, a lighter color stain is always surface damage and has no relation whatsoever with the absorbency rate of the damaged material (stone or otherwise). There is not a single exception to this rule.

A stain is a discoloration of the stone or surface produced by a staining agent that was actually absorbed by the surface. Other discolorations have nothing to do with the porosity or absorbency of the stone or surface, but rather are a result of damage to the surface. All those stains that look like water spots or water rings are actually marks of corrosion edge marks created by some chemically active liquid, mostly but not necessarily limited to acids, which has a chance to come into contact with the surface.

All calcite-based surfaces such as marble, limestone, Onyx, travertine, etcetera are sensitive to acids. Therefore, they will etch readily within a few seconds. Many slates will also edge, and so will a few granites and soap stones. Those that, instead of being 100% silicate rock, are mixed with a certain percentage of calcite.

Now, let's discuss how to remove stains!



POULTICES

What is a poultice?

It is the combination of a very absorbent medium it must be more absorbent than the surface mixed with the chemical which is to be selected in accordance with the type of stain to be removed.

The concept is to reabsorb the stain out of the surface. The chemical will attack the stain inside the surface and the absorbent agent will then pull them both out together. The absorbent agent can be the same all the time regardless of the nature of the stain to be removed but the chemical will be different in accordance with the nature of the staining agent since it will have to interact with it.

The absorbent part of a poultice could be in order of preference talcum powder or baby powder paper towel or a diatomaceous earth the white stuff inside your swimming pool filter for larger projects.

NOTE: there are convenient policing kits that make the task of stain removal easier you may want to ask us for some specific recommendations.

As we said before, the chemical must be selected in accordance with the nature of the staining agent. There are five major categories of stains:

1. **organic stains** - such as coffee, tea, coloring agents of dark sodas and other drinks, gravy, foods, etc.
2. **inorganic stains** - such as ink, color dyes, dirt water spilling over from a flower or plant pot, etc.
3. **oily stains** - such as a type of vegetable oil, certain mineral oils, motor oil, butter or margarine, melted animal fat, etc.
4. **biological stains** - such as mildew mold, etc.
5. **metal stains** - such as rust and copper, etc.

The chemical of choice for both organic and inorganic stains is hydrogen peroxide 30/40 volumes the clear type available at your local beauty salon. The one from the drug store is too weak at 3.5 volume.

Sometimes in the case of ink stains denatured alcohol or rubbing alcohol may turn out to be more effective. For oily stains our favorite is acetone which is available at any hardware or paint store. Forget your nail polish remover. Some of them contain other chemicals and others contain no acetone whatsoever. We also carry an oil and stain premixed poultice kit in our online store. For biological stains I can try using regular household bleach (carefully as these can often yellow a surface) or mildew stain remover designated safe for your surface such as our MB 9. For metal or rust stains our favorite is a white powder to be dissolved in water called iron out which can be found in any hardware store this is also a product called R SR-2000 that is used and recommended by restoration contractors all over the world. But be careful and make sure to wear proper PPE.



ETCHING

Polished surfaces especially absorbent surfaces such as polished marble travertine Onyx limestone ETC. Are all calcite-based stones and as such are affected by pH active liquids mostly acidic in nature.

In layman's terms, when an acidic liquid gets on a polished marble travertine slate surface it etches it on contact. That is, it leaves a mark of corrosion that looks like a water stain or ring. Such surface damage has nothing to do with the absorbency rate of the stone typically quite low anyway, but exclusively with its chemical makeup, which as mentioned before, is mostly calcite calcium carbonate (CaCO_3). Trying to remove the stain by poulticing it would be a useless exercise since it is not a stain no matter what it looks like.

So how do you remove a chemical edge mark which as seen is not a stain but surface damage? You don't!

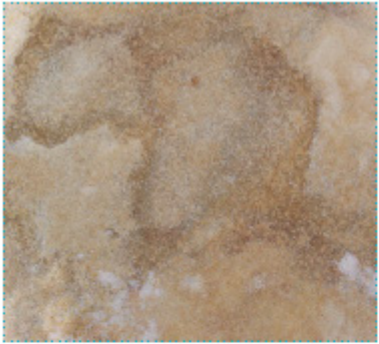
An etch mark can be effectively compared to as defined as a shallow chemical scratch. Scratches something missing like a groove, and nobody can remove something that is already missing. It would be like trying to remove a hole from a doughnut! The only thing one can do is eat the donut and the hole is gone. The same thing goes for a scratch you must remove whatever is around the groove down to the depth of the deepest point of that scratch.

You are facing a full-fledged (though small in size) stone restoration project! Is this the task for the average homeowner? The answer is maybe.

If it is a polished marble travertine or Onyx, then there's hope. If it is a honed finished marble or travertine or honed finished slate like a chalkboard or mixed granite then you probably should hire a professional stone refinisher. If it's a cleft finish slate rippled on its surface, then nobody can do anything about it other than attempt to mask it by applying a good quality stone color enhancer.

While marble and other calcite-based stones are vulnerable to acids granite is much more resistant the only acid that will edge polished granite is a hydraulic acid commonly found in rust removers.

If the edge is light the depth is undetectable by the naked eye and it looks and feels smooth, then a polishing compound for marble will work quite well without requiring the experience of a professional. In this case, no specific tools are needed other than a piece of terry cloth or OOOO-steel wool and our etch removal product kit.



HOW TO MAKE A POULTICE

Don't forget your PPE! Wear rubber gloves and eye protection at all times while handling chemicals.

if you've chosen talcum powder (baby powder) or other powder as your absorbent medium follow these instructions:

1. mix it using a metal spatula or spoon and a glass or stainless-steel bowl together with the chemical to form a paste just a tad thinner than peanut butter thin enough but not runny. If you are attempting to remove a metal rust stain first dissolve the iron-out with water according to the directions on the container then mix with an equal amount of talcum powder adding water if it turns out to be too thick or talcum is too runny.
2. Apply the poultice onto the stain going approximately 1/4 inch over it all around keeping it as thick as possible at least 1/4 inch thick.
3. Cover the poultice with plastic wrap and tape it down using masking tape. Make sure to take out all of the air.
4. Leave the whole thing alone for at least 24 hours no peeking! Then remove the plastic wrap after 24 hours.
5. Remember to allow the poultice to dry thoroughly! It may take a couple of hours to a couple of days or more depending on the chemical. This is the phase during which the absorbent agent is reabsorbing the chemical that was forced into the surface, together hopefully with the staining agent, and you do not want to interrupt the process by peaking.
6. Once the poultice is completely dry scrape it off the surface up with a plastic spatula clean the area with a little swirl of neutral cleaner then wipe it dry with a clean rag or Paper towel. If the stain is gone your mission is over! If some of it is still there repeat the whole procedure, especially in the case of oily stains it may take up to four or five attempts. If it didn't remove at all either you made a mistake while evaluating the nature of the stain and consequently used the wrong chemical or the stain is just too old and will not come out or it was not a stain but another type of discoloration.

If you decide to use a paper towel instead of talcum powder, make a pillow with it 8 or 10 folds thick and a little wider than the stain soak it with the chemical to a point that's wet through but not dripping apply it on the stain and lap it with your gloved fingertips to ensure full contact with the surface of the stone. Then take it from step three above.

Combination stains

Sometimes, we may have a combination of stain with etching. For example, some red wine is spilled on an absorbent polished limestone, then the acidity of the wine (acetic acid) will etch and (corrode) the surface on contact while the dark color of the wine will stain the stone by being absorbed by it in such a case first you remove the stain by poulticing with hydrogen peroxide then repair the etching by refinishing the surface.



Potential Stone Problems



Marble, granite, limestone and other decorative stones are highly durable materials that can endure a lifetime. However, if they are not installed correctly or not taken care of properly, it can lead to problems that may shorten their lifespan. Below are some of the most common problems that may occur with these stones:

1. **Loss of shine:** The high polish on certain marbling granite may be lost due to wear and tear, especially in the case of marble, which is much softer than granite. When shoes track dirt and sand, the soles of the shoes can act like sandpaper on a stone floor surface, which can gradually wear off the polish. However, a stone restoration professional can restore the polish using several different techniques.
2. **Etching:** When acidic liquids are spilled on marble and limestone, they create a dull whitish spot, which is called etching. Marble and limestone are very prone to etching, while granite is highly resistant to acids and therefore rarely etches. To prevent etching, it is advisable to avoid using cleaners and chemicals that contain acids. If you notice light etching on your marble surface, it can be removed with a little effort and a good marble polishing compound. However, if the etching is deep or covers a large area, it's best to hire a professional restoration service to handle the job using specialized tools and equipment.
3. **Stains:** Stone surfaces can easily get stained if they are not prepared or sealed correctly. Stains can be caused by many things, such as food, drinks, ink, oil, and rust. Fortunately, most stains on stone can be removed with appropriate cleaning methods. However, some stubborn stains may require professional techniques from a stone restoration provider. Unfortunately, some stains may be permanent. For more information on how to take care of your stone surfaces, contact a certified surface care expert trained by Surface Buff.
4. **Efflorescence:** Efflorescence is a common condition that appears as a white powdery residue on the surface of stone. This can happen when the stone is newly installed or exposed to a large amount of water, such as during flooding or in a shower. The residue is a mineral salt that comes from the setting bed or grout. To remove efflorescence, do not use water or pressure wash. Instead, buff the surface with a clean polishing pad or #0000 steel wool pad. It's important to note that the stone will continue to efflorescence until it dries completely. This drying process can take anywhere from several days to a year. Our trained technicians can help clean and reduce efflorescence, as well as seal your surface to prevent moisture from getting in and causing more problems.
5. **Spalling:** If you notice small pits or pieces of your stone popping off the surface, this is a problem known as spalling. This condition is common in stones that are exposed to large amounts of water or de-icing salts. Just like efflorescence, mineral salts are the cause of spalling and pitting. If the depth of the pits is more than a nickel, it is considered excessive, and you'll need to hire a restoration contractor to grind the surface to flatten it. The issue of pitting can also be caused by using the wrong cleaning care products on the surface. This can weaken the surface, causing minerals to break apart and form pits.



DIRTY, STAINED GROUT LINES



LIPPAGE (UNEVEN TILES)



SPALLING

6. Yellowing: There are multiple reasons why a stone can turn yellow. Dirt and grime that gets embedded can give a stone a yellowish and dingy appearance. Waxes and other topicals can also turn yellow over time. Certain types of stones can naturally turn yellow as they age due to oxidation from the iron within them, particularly white marbles. If the yellowing is caused by dirt, wax, or topical buildup, it is best to have the stone cleaned with an alkaline cleaner or wax stripper. This might be a task better suited for professionals. However, if the yellowing is due to aged stone or iron oxidation, it is unlikely to be removed.

7. Uneven tile (lippage): Lippage is a term used to describe tiles that have been unevenly set. This means that the edge of one tile is higher than the next, and it's usually caused by poor installation. If the lippage is higher than the thickness of a nickel, it's considered excessive. In such cases, restoration contractors can grind down stone tiles to flatten the floor. However, this is not possible with man-made materials.

8. Cracks and chips: Cracks in stone can be caused by various factors such as settling, poor insulation, inadequate underlying support, or excessive vibration. Chips can result from bad installation or a heavy object falling on the vulnerable corners. If you need repairs, it is recommended to hire a professional stone restoration contractor to fill the affected areas with a color-matched polyester or epoxy.

9. White stun marks: Stun marks are white marks that appear on the surface of certain types of softer stones, like marble. These marks are the result of tiny explosions inside the crystal of the stone. They are caused by pinpoint pressures placed on the surface, such as those from high-heeled shoes or blunt pointed instruments. Removing stun marks can be difficult, as they can travel through the entire thickness of the stone. Grinding or honing may reduce their number, but they may not be completely eliminated.

10. Water rings/spots: Water rings and spots are a common issue on surfaces, especially on calcite-based minerals and other stone surfaces. They occur when certain areas become etched or when hard water minerals such as calcium and magnesium are left behind once the water evaporates. To remove these spots, you can use a marble polishing compound. However, if the etching is moderate to severe, or if there is significant damage, it is best to seek the services of a professional stone restoration contractor who can perform honing on the surface.

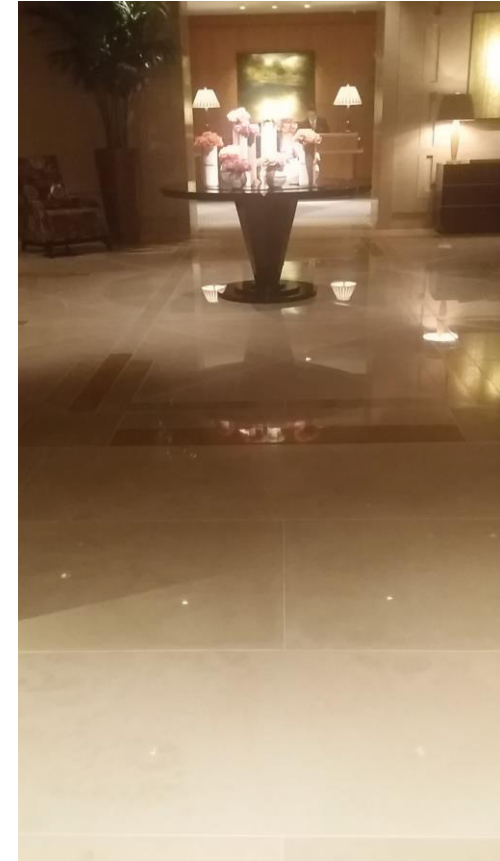
Are you tired of dealing with stone issues? Look no further! Surface Buff has the solution you need. Contact one of our certified Surface Care Experts today to get professional help and put an end to your stone troubles.



Hiring a Contractor

General tips for hiring a contractor when hiring a contractor, review them. Check at least two or three of the references, verify their insurance, see what professional organizations they're affiliated with, and confirm they are a member in good standing. Don't hesitate to trust your gut feeling. Are you comfortable with the contractor? This is much more important than you think.

Note: according to Consumer Reports, the biggest mistake consumers make is "being seduced by the price alone." Would you hire the cheapest surgeon in town to operate on you or one of your family members? There is a saying, "Some of the most expensive work you will ever pay for is cheap work." Consider that your home is your biggest investment, and you should always think long-term period consider the consequences that saving a few dollars now will have over 3, 5, or 10 years of living there. Your most important tool and evaluating the cost of a project is the value of what you are getting for your money. Low prices are usually a trade-off for cutting corners, lack of education and experience, lower quality materials, workmanship, warranty, or adequate insurance. Remember that most average jobs can look good when completed. The true test is how they hold up over the years. Did the contractor use proper methods and materials to give you a professional quality result? These differences are usually the difference between a lower and a higher estimate



Hiring a PRO

Proper care and maintenance of stone begins with careful selection. When considering a new stone installation, it's crucial to select a qualified fabricator who can help you choose the right stone for the environment it will be placed in. A good fabricator will ensure that the final result is both pleasing to the eye and durable. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when selecting a stone for your project.

Fabricators

When it comes to getting a new countertop or custom fabricated stone project, selecting a good fabricator should be your top priority. A qualified fabricator can ensure that your installation is successful by choosing the right stone for the environment, accurate templating, proper seam placement, and correct installation. Failure to pay attention to any of these important aspects can result in maintenance problems down the line. So, don't let price be the main deciding factor when selecting a fabricator, as it may end up costing you more in the long run.

Selecting stone

Proper care and maintenance of stone begins with careful selection. When considering a new stone installation, it's crucial to select a qualified fabricator who can help you choose the right stone for the environment it will be placed in. A good fabricator will ensure that the final result is both pleasing to the eye and durable. Here are some general guidelines to keep in mind when selecting a stone for your project.

Calcite-based stones like marble, travertine, limestone, etc. can get etched when they come in contact with acid. Therefore, special care needs to be taken while using these stones in kitchens or other places where acidic liquids can be spilled. There are new treatments available through specialty-certified applicators that provide an etch-resistant protective barrier. It should also be considered that marbles and other calcite-based stones are relatively soft stones. You can refer to the MOHS scale diagram for more information.

Granite is a great material for kitchen countertops because it is resistant to acids and is very hard, typically measuring 7 to 9 on the MOHS scale. This means that it doesn't scratch easily and is also easy to maintain and repair if needed. To make your final selection, be sure to refer to the lemon juice and oil test on the next pages.



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OUR RECOMMENDED FABRICATOR
IN NORTH CAROLINA
IS SET IN STONE IN ABERDEEN NC. THEY
OFFER A WIDE SELECTION OF
HIGH-QUALITY SLABS, ALL
STORED INDOORS
TO PREVENT DAMAGE.

Soapstone is a porous, durable sedimentary rock composed of cemented sand sized grains, predominantly courts. It is categorized by the most popular bonding agents such as silica, calcium, clay, and iron oxide. Sandstone is commonly used for flooring, countertops, and vertical surfaces in both interior and exterior environments.

Quartzite is a common mineral silicon dioxide, SiO_2 , and is usually colorless or white, although it may be colored by impurities. It has a vitreous luster, and conchoidal fracture, and is a 7 on the MOHS scale there are several varieties of quartz, including rock crystal, amethyst, chalcedony, and agate. It is commonly used for countertops, flooring, showers, and vertical surfaces.

“Quartz is a type of man-made material that cannot be repaired in the same way as natural stone. If it gets damaged, it needs to be treated like a car. Unlike natural stone, it cannot be honed and brought down to the next layer. Most courts have a 6 on the MO HS scale. Some manufacturers try to push certain types of products of their man-made materials to make more profit and steer people away from natural stone surfaces.”

A polished finish is achieved by creating a scratch pattern on the surface. The finer the scratches, the shinier the surface appears. This method is used on mechanically polished surfaces. However, surfaces that are harder and denser, such as those rated 7 or higher, often require a topical resin to obtain a polished shine.

MOHS scale

in 1812 the MO HS scale of mineral hardness was divided by the German mineralogist Frederick MOHS (1773 – 1839), who select the 10 minerals because they were common or readily available. The scale is not a linear scale, but somewhat arbitrary. An item with a higher MOHS value can scratch an item with a lower MO HS value. A lower rated item cannot scratch a higher rated one. Kitchen countertops with the seven plus are considered excellent, a six is good, A5 is poor because kitchen knives can scratch and a four or below is inadvisable. When sediment and grit are harder than the surface, they will scratch and harm the surface.



A NOTE ON RESINING

Resining is a procedure that was introduced to the stone world by the Italians not too long ago to improve on the natural characteristics of certain stones, namely certain “granites” that are either too porous, or inherently prone to having a high percentage of natural flaws, such as fissures, pitting, etc.

The “resining” of a slab is not done by the factories that process blocks into slabs. It is rather done by separate high-tech facilities where the slabs are delivered as they come out from the gang-saw, and before one of their two sides is further processed by grinding, honing and polishing. The slabs are enclosed in a vacuum-filled chamber, and a flowing resin is applied onto it. The vacuum environment helps the resin being deeply absorbed into the stone. After proper curing time, the slabs are sent back to the original processing plants, where they will be calibrated, ground, honed and polished. The resin will be totally eliminated from the polished surface of the slab and it will be exposed only as a filler of the possible natural fissure and pits of the stone and that would be otherwise unfilled and more or less obvious.

Is there anything wrong about such a procedure? Not really. There is indeed a lack of data about the long term effect (if any) of the resin inside the stone, but there are solid reasons to believe that nothing bad will come from it. Resin has been used in the stone industry for a few generations already. Once cured, the resin is chemically inert (thus totally safe) and will not react with most chemicals.

There are, however, a few things to be taken into consideration:

1. Sometimes the “resining” process is used to “upgrade” slabs. Translation: by resining the low-grade slabs they will become “good.” If the resining is done to eliminate the absorbency of the stone or to fill the natural pits, that is okay, but if it is done to mask some bad slab . . . well, you fill in the blanks. This is just another reason why the reputation of your fabricator is paramount. A reputable fabricator will never knowingly buy “doctored” slabs!
2. While you could put a hot pot or pan right out of the stove onto “granite”, you could NOT do that if the slab had been resined. Irreparable damages to the resin may occur from the heat of the pot or pan reacting with the resin.

Certain resins may turn out to be photosensitive and its color altered over time if exposed to UV rays. Resined slabs are NOT recommended for outdoor kitchens and where they will be in direct sunlight.

The Lemon Juice and Oil Test—A great test for selecting granite for your kitchen counter tops



It's time now to select the stone for your kitchen counter tops. What do you look for?

Two things: Absorbency and acid sensitivity. You do NOT want a “granite” too absorbent, and you do NOT want a “granite” that is mixed with calcite (the main component of marble and limestone.). Line samples of any stone you are considering on a table or counter top, dust them thoroughly then pour a few drops of lemon juice and cooking oil on each one of them.

If you notice the stain immediately turns dark where the juice and the oil were applied to the stone, the stone is very absorbent and will not be ideal for a kitchen area.

If you notice that the juice and the oil take a little time to get absorbed (a half a minute or better), then you have a stone whose absorbency can be effectively controlled with a good quality impregnator. If you notice that some samples will not absorb anything within, half an hour or longer, then you may have a winner. That stone may not even need to be sealed. Now, how to eliminate the word ‘may’ from the equation? The answer resides in another question:

Why use lemon juice instead of, say, plain water? Because, as mentioned above, you're not just looking to determine the absorbency of the stones you're considering, but you also want to determine that your samples are 100% silicate rocks, opposed to some stones—still traded as granite—that are mixed with various percentages of calcite. If there's even a little calcite in the stone, it will react to the high acidity of the lemon juice (citric acid). When you wipe your samples dry, you will notice a dull spot of the same shape of the lemon drops. If this is the case, this stone would not be a good candidate for a kitchen area. If instead it's still nice and shiny where the drops were, then you eliminated the ‘may’ factor and have a stone that is acid resistant and has a low absorbency rate.

All in all, “resining” is good (with the limitations listed above). Even “granites” that wouldn't normally make the list of preferred stones would become more than acceptable if “resined.” The resin will be totally eliminated from the polished surface of the slab and it will be exposed only as a filler of the possible natural fissure and pits of the stone that would be otherwise unfilled and more or less obvious. All in all, “resining” is good (with the limitations listed above). Even “granites” that wouldn't normally make the list of preferred stones would become more than acceptable if “resined.”

STONE RESTORATION CONTRACTORS

Generally speaking, restoration of stone is the restoring of worn stone to the state in which it was installed. It may also entail the altering of the stone's original factory finish to match a desired finish of the installation's owner or management. In some cases an owner may desire a polished surface to be honed or vice versa.

Restoration is a process that can only be done by a professional stone restoration company. Your typical maintenance/janitorial or tile and grout cleaning company will not have the proper tools or experience to restore natural stone.

WHAT IS INVOLVED?

Restoration of marble, granite, limestone, travertine or other natural stone involves the removal of scratches and/or other damage from the surface of the stone. The optimal method is mechanical abrasion known as diamond grinding. Diamond grinding gives better clarity and reflectivity than other methods that can be used, such as the use of sanding screens, honing powders or crystallization. A stone floor that has been restored with diamonds will also retain its look longer than it will with the use of these other methods. While the use of diamonds may cost you more in the beginning, having your floors redone every 4-6 years compared to every 1-2 years (as with other methods) will cost you less in the long run.

Natural stone reflects light and therefore does not need a topical coating or wax to achieve this desired finish. It only needs a series of diamond grits used in the proper order by a craftsman who is experienced in their use. This is followed by a careful polishing technique that can only be mastered through experience. A restoration professional will also take care to protect the surrounding surfaces from damage. The diamond grinding technique



DID YOU KNOW?

Cracks and chips in both marble and granite can be filled to look very natural.

involves large amounts of water and this could be damaging to wood and carpet if measures are not properly taken to ensure the use of water was kept to a minimum and protection against splatter is used.



Choosing a Stone Restoration Contractor

Over a period of time all marble will be abraded, etched, and/or scratched depending on its use. Major restorations usually are best left to the stone restoration contractor. A contractor will evaluate the stone, the cause of the damage, and provide a concise plan to reach specific goals.

Do not compare bids on cost alone. You must have confidence that the restoration contractor understands the stone, has qualified employees, proper equipment and the experience to meet reasonable expectations. Determine in detail how the contractor will proceed and plan for the disruption such work involves. The contractor should recommend a maintenance program to assure longevity of the finished work.

SERVICES A STONE RESTORATION CONTRACTOR CAN PROVIDE

Grinding—Grinding will remove deep scratches and lippage (uneven tile edges). This process is done by special floor machines with diamond abrasive pads and water that creates no dust.

Seam Polishing—very visible seams in counter tops can be filled and mechanically polished to virtually disappear.

Honing—Honing will remove minor scratches and wear from everyday foot traffic. This process is also done by machine with diamond abrasive pads and water that creates no dust.

Polishing—Gives marble or natural stone the sheen you want, enhances the veining in marble and protects the marble or stone from everyday traffic and spills. The same compounds that are used in the fabricating process are utilized.

Alter a Finish—A stone's finish can be changed. For example, a honed finish can be changed to a polished finish and vice versa. Special brushes and techniques allow for additional decorative finishes.

Cleaning—Removes dirt, stains, bacteria and also removes waxes and polymers that have become embedded. Cleaning alone will not change the physical appearance of the stone (removes etch marks and scratches).

Sealing—To inhibit staining, an impregnating sealer is applied. Some more absorbent stones may require multiple applications.

Color Enhancing—The use of penetrating sealers / impregnators formulated to enhance or enrich the color of your stone.

Crack and Chip Repair—Cracks and chips in both marble and granite can be filled.

Fill Pits and Blemishes—Both limestone and travertine imperfections are filled at the factory. Unsightly blemishes that occur when factory fill fails or new ones develop can be filled.

Stripping—Removes coatings that can block a stone's ability to breathe, which causes spalling (when the stones crack, pop and shale). Some examples of common coatings are crystallization, janitorial waxes and polyurethane.

Grout Cleaning and Sealing—Dirt loves to hide in grout. Brushes cannot penetrate into the micro pores to get all of the contaminants out. Grout can be cleaned to like new, and then sealed to facilitate easier ongoing maintenance.

MAINTENANCE SERVICES

What should you be concerned with when hiring a janitorial or cleaning company when you have natural stone? First and foremost, always ask the prospective cleaning professional if they have been specifically educated in natural stone maintenance.

By far, one of the most common causes of damage to marble and other calcite-based stones is the wrong cleaning product has been used on or near the stone, which resulted in etching—

sometimes so severe there is nothing that can be done, short of having a restoration contractor mechanically polish out the damage.

A properly trained cleaning professional will know which products to use and which to avoid. They should also know to look for and recognize various potential problems and be able to point them out to you before they become serious. Janitorial companies trained in natural stone care will know the techniques and products to use to preserve and maintain polished marble floors. Some also include sealing in their menu of services.



TILE & GROUT CLEANING CONTRACTORS

A properly trained tile and grout restoration contractor can clean and restore your tile and grout and make it look brand new. Missing grout and broken tiles can be replaced.

SEALING GROUT—CLEAR OR COLOR SEALING

Grout is porous and will absorb liquids, which can permanently discolor grout and create a haven for bacteria growth. Sealing your grout provides a protective barrier that not only protects it from stains, it makes routine cleaning and maintenance easier. Grout can be sealed with a clear sealer or it can be "ColorSealed."

Having your grout sealed makes it less porous and provides some degree of protection, assuming a good-quality sealer is used and is applied correctly. In this case, spills and stains will be less likely to permanently stain the grout. A common misconception that consumers have is that clear sealers are bulletproof. Although this is not the case, clear sealers will make daily maintenance easier, future restorations more effective and will allow a little time to catch a spill before the grout is penetrated.

Color sealing makes the grout completely waterproof. If a high-quality color seal product



is used and is applied correctly the grout will look natural, not painted, and provide the highest level of protection available. When a floor has been color sealed you can spill black coffee on white grout and let it completely dry—the seal is so effective that it can be wiped off of the grout with mild cleaner, without leaving a trace of any stain.

Color sealing also has the added advantage that it allows you to completely change the color of your grout whether it is just for a new look or to cover up stained or discolored grout.

TILE INSTALLERS

Ceramic, porcelain, or natural stone tile is an excellent choice for flooring, walls, counter tops, fireplace surrounds, and more—for both interior and exterior applications. Keep in mind as you are planning the installation that your choice of installer is as important a consideration as your choice of tiles and design.

Why is it so important to be choosy about your installer? Consider the cost of a poor installation:

TILE FLOORING AND WALLS

- Cracked tiles
- Uneven grout lines
- Loose tile



- Hollow tile, which can result in cracks and tiles popping out
- The use of the wrong grout or setting material may result in failure
- Lippage—one tile higher or lower than the adjacent tile

COUNTER TOPS

- Uneven top resulting in one section higher than another
- Cracked tops
- Use of the wrong caulking can result in staining or water getting inside
- Misalignment of edges
- Tops that rock due to improper shimming
- Staining

TIPS FOR HIRING AN INSTALLER

1. While you may want to shop around for your tiles or stone, you may want to let the installer do that for you.
2. Once you have your prospective installer candidates, schedule an appointment for an estimate. Almost all contractors will offer a free estimate. Be sure you are there for the scheduled time. It can be very frustrating for a contractor to arrive for an estimate only to find that no one is home. On the other hand, if the contractor doesn't show for the scheduled appointment without calling first, he obviously does not deserve your project.
3. Once the installer arrives, tell him what your concerns are and what you want. After all, you will be living with the floor or other installation every day. The installer is seeing it for the first time. Give him as much information as possible.
4. Once the contractor has decided what is needed, ask him to explain the procedure he intends to use. Ask him if there are other options. A competent installer should be more than happy to answer any question you may have.
5. Negotiating price. Some contractors will negotiate, while others will stick to their guns. However, if you mention that you are getting two additional estimates, he may sharpen his pencil knowing he is competing with others. One word of caution: be sure you are comparing apples to apples.
6. Is he part of any professional organizations? Verify this. Ask for references and check them. Many contractors in all fields have references and you will be surprised how rarely they are actually checked. Call at least three and ask them if the contractor did a good job. Were there any problems and did he correct them? Were his employees professional?
7. Does the contractor carry insurance? Ask him for proof. Have him show you a certificate of insurance—or if the job is large enough—have his insurance company send you one. Be sure he carries both liability and workman's compensation insurance. Any reputable company will carry these insurances.
8. Once you choose your installer, schedule the job. Don't be surprised if the installer is booked for several weeks. Be patient—a good installer may be busy and you will have to wait your turn.

9. Ask the contractor how long it will take to complete the job. This is an important point since many contractors are doing several jobs at once. Make sure the time schedule is in his contract. Be realistic—there are several problems that can occur that will delay the work. Even the best contractors can make mistakes. The difference between the good contractor and the bad is his willingness to correct those mistakes.



INITIAL CLEANING OF A NEWLY-INSTALLED TILE FLOOR

The initial cleaning of a new tile or stone floor or wall should be performed by the installation contractor. If the contractor has not performed a final cleanup or if you installed it yourself, below is the recommended procedure.

A new stone or tile floor may have a slight film due to dust settling from construction or an inadequate cleanup of the grout residue. It is very important that excess grout be removed before it has a chance to dry, within 24 hours for cement grout and one hour for epoxy grouts. If excess cements grout is left on the surface for more than 24 hours then use the following procedure:

EXCESS GROUT CLEANUP

1. Remove any large chunks of grout with a scraper. On polished stone, take care not to scratch the surface.
2. Sweep or dust mop floor to remove all loose debris.
3. Rinse the floor several times with plain water. Apply water with a string mop, wrung tightly. Avoid flooding the tile, as excessive water may cause discoloration of the grout. If too much water is applied, pick up excess with a wrung string mop or wet vacuum.
4. If grout residue still remains after several rinses it will be necessary to use a grout removing chemical as follows:

For marble and stone: Add 3-4 oz. of household ammonia to water and rinse the floor several times. There are also several non-acidic grout removers available.

For glazed ceramic/ porcelain: Mix a mild solution of 2-4 oz. of sulfamic acid and water. Rinse the floor several times. Repeat rinsing with ammonia and water solution to remove acid residue. Do NOT use any other acids besides sulfamic acid. There are several grout cleaners available which contain sulfamic acid. Ask us for recommendations.

Do not use any acids on polished marble!

EPOXY GROUT CLEANUP

Epoxy grouts are made from 100% epoxy resins. They have excellent chemical resistance properties and are highly recommended for tile in kitchens and baths as well as counter tops and shower walls. If you choose to have epoxy grout installed, make sure your tile installer has experience working with these grouts.



One of the biggest problems with epoxy grouts is failing to clean up the grout residue. Unlike cement based grouts that can sit for 24 hours, epoxy grout needs to be thoroughly cleaned within one hour or cleanup may prove difficult to impossible, depending on the surface type. If epoxy residue remains the following procedure is recommended:

1. Carefully scrape any large pieces of epoxy from the surface using a sharp razor blade. Wetting the area first will help prevent scratching.
2. Mix a solution of hot water (the hotter the better) and several drops of dish washing detergent (Ivory, Dove, etc.). Apply the solution to the epoxy and scrub with a green scrub pad.
3. If the soap solution does not remove the epoxy, try wiping the surface with a clean white rag and acetone. (Be very careful to use all safety precautions when using acetone or other strong chemicals.)
4. If acetone fails, the epoxy will have to be removed with a stronger solvent. This is the time to contact your stone and tile restoration contractor.



RECOMMENDED CARE PRODUCTS

Did you know that improper cleaning is a significant reason surface restoration is needed?

We make it a point to educate our customers on proper surface care. To keep your surfaces looking their best, we strongly recommend to our customers that you use only quality products that are safe for your surface and actually – safe for you to use.

We proudly offer products that are proven, never animal tested and are safe for the environment as well as your surfaces.

We offer surface care kits as well as quality tooling such as rags, squeegees, microfiber mops, brushes, etc. Ask your technician for a brochure or visit our store on our website.



Visit us online at www.surfacebuff.com for more details and helpful tips



GREEN THING

EPA Certified Green GT-1 Green Thing is an EPA certified "Green" cleaner. It is pH neutral and ready to use; formulated to safely and easily clean ALL hard surface types, including honed and polished marble, limestone, travertine, granite, slate, ceramic and porcelain tiles, Corian, laminate as well as painted wall surfaces. Ready To Use This no-rinse, fast evaporating, powerful, daily cleaner works effectively to cut through soils on all hard surfaces at home and work Easy To Use!



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YOUR FINE SURFACE CARE EXPERTS

Visit us online at www.surfacebuff.com for more details and helpful tips

MB-5 ALLPURPOSE CLEANER

MB-5 Multi-Surface is a cleaner that is pH-neutral and formulated to clean all surfaces such as marble, woods, granite, ceramic, tainless steel, Corian, porcelain, mirrors, and other hard surfaces. It is safe to use daily and works effectively on bath and kitchen fixtures. Remover.



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FINITO

Finito is a product that can help you achieve a smooth and shiny surface finish. It not only adds shine to your surfaces, but also provides a protective shield that repels water, reduces light scratches, and prevents fingerprints. As a result, cleaning and dusting your surfaces becomes much easier and hassle-free.



Visit us online at www.surfacebuff.com for more details and helpful tips

ALL PURPOSE WIPES

Introducing MB-17 Stone Wipes, the easiest way to achieve a perfectly clean space! Our pre-moistened wipes remove dust, dirt, oil, grease, smudges, and even fingerprints. They won't leave any streaks or sticky film. Plus, they work wonders on bathroom fixtures and stainless steel. Embrace a cleaner future with MB-17 Stone Wipes and say goodbye to cleaning headaches!



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YOUR FINE SURFACE CARE EXPERTS



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FLOOR & WOOD CARE

"Get rid of dirt and dullness with our extraordinary MB-1 Floor Amore! What makes MB-1 unique is its rinse-free formula, which effectively removes dirt and grime without leaving any unsightly residue. The exceptional organic salts present in this formula provide your natural stone, wood, and tiled surfaces with the much-needed moisturizing effect, protecting them from drying out. The rinse-free formula is easy to use and rehydrates your surfaces, keeping them clean while safeguarding them.



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MAINTENANCE LOG

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