

How to 'winterize' your carpets by Dennis Jurecki

Winter is just around the corner, and it's time to start thinking about updating your maintenance routine.

Ice, snow, slush, and ice melting agents, such as salt and sand can heavily damage carpets.

Walk-off mats, daily vacuuming, a spot cleaning plan, and carpet encapsulation are four ways to protect carpets from winter weather. Here's some direction:

- **Walk-off mats** are one of the best defenses against winter weather for carpets. They remove 80 percent of the debris that enters a building and keep water and moisture from seeping into the carpet. Use heavy-duty foyer or exterior mats outside of entrances, and interior walk-off mats just inside entrances, and in high traffic areas. Select walk-off mats that are long enough for a person to take several steps on it.
- **Daily vacuuming** removes 75 percent or more of the loose dirt and soil on floors. Carpets and rugs should be vacuumed at least once a day to ensure salt, sand and dirt are quickly removed and not carried to other areas of the building. If left unattended, salt and sand can strip the chemical compound of carpet fibers and cause discoloration.
- **Spot cleaning** should be performed as necessary to remove excess dirt and standing water from carpets. Ice melters and grit can become entrenched in carpet fibers and break them down if not removed immediately. To deep clean carpets, experts recommend carpet encapsulation.
- **Carpet encapsulation** is a newly established cleaning process designed for maintaining moderate to heavily soiled, high-traffic installations of commercial carpet. It's a low moisture process and is ideal for winter months because it will not contribute to mold growth. Carpet encapsulation uses a cleaning agent plus agitation from a scrubber machine to separate oils and dirt from carpet fibers. Choose a scrubber with strong agitation ability which is achieved with a counter rotating three-brush scrubber. The oils and dirt are crystallized and suspended through this process, and then vacuumed through post-routine vacuuming.

A proactive approach to winter cleaning ensures carpets are protected and prevents future problems.

Also, it is important that all staff members are aware of the winter cleaning routine and receive training on any new techniques or equipment.

This will guarantee a smooth transition into winter and maintain high standards of cleanliness and safety.

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