

Deicer Tracking and Indoor Care

Contents

Summary	1
The Importance of Application Rate	1
Use of Walk-Off Mats	2
Floor Care and Maintenance	2
Other Tips to Prevent Slips	2

SUMMARY

Deicing is a critical part of a winter maintenance program, helping to prevent slips, trips, and falls on sidewalks and in parking lots. However, when deicers are applied to snow and ice, the result is slush, meltwater, and sometimes residual deicer. Foot traffic through this slush, meltwater, and residual deicer can result in some of the material being transferred indoors – posing a potential slipping hazard. To minimize risk, always apply deicers using proper application rates. Best practices would also include the use walk-off mats and appropriate floor cleaning techniques.

THE IMPORTANCE OF APPLICATION RATE

Deicers should be used sparingly; use only enough to break the bond between the ice and the pavement. Once this bond is broken, remove the remaining ice, snow, or slush with a shovel or other device. Deicers should be applied prior to periods of peak foot traffic. It is a sign of over-application when significant quantities of solid deicer remain on a surface that is free of snow and ice.

USE OF WALK-OFF MATS

The use and maintenance of walk-off mats are one of the simplest and most effective means to reduce tracking of deicers into buildings. Absorbent mats placed in entrances, lobby doorways, and immediately in front of access doors can help trap slush. Mats that extend 6 feet to 15 feet can trap 80% of soil and moisture from the first five or six steps. Additionally, it is advisable to have long walk-off “runners” so that individuals can shake off the snow or water that is on their shoes. Walk-off mats should be cleaned on a regular basis. If not cleaned, the mats can become overloaded and no longer trap residue.

FLOOR CARE AND MAINTENANCE

If deicer is tracked onto your floor, quickly clean the floor. If deicer is tracked onto your carpet, rest assured that most deicers are water soluble and are easily removed with a carpet cleaning machine using hot water. Several carpet manufacturers suggest a Hot Water Extraction process to clean deicers out of carpets. This method involves the injection of water into the carpet pile to loosen the soil and subsequent vacuuming of the water and suspended dirt out of the carpet. After cleaning, the carpet must be allowed to dry.

Use of detergent is generally not recommended unless the detergent is pH neutral or citric based (slightly acidic) and the carpet is thoroughly rinsed after washing. When detergents dry, they can attract grease, oils, and soils.

OTHER TIPS TO PREVENT SLIPS

Other slip prevention tips include:

- If possible, have a maintenance person stationed at the door throughout high-traffic times (mornings, lunch hour, and evenings).
- Post hazard signs very close to the front door so that people coming into the building are aware that they should be cautious.

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