

## The Stripping Process - Eliminating Problems Before They Begin

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Many floor crews encounter problems while stripping floors. Some problems result from poor performance of low quality chemical products purchased to hold down costs, others from the failure to follow proper procedures. Following are some practical guidelines that may be useful in your floor maintenance program. These directions can help overcome problems before they arise.

*“Proper preparation of the area is a key to problem free stripping.”*

**Safety** All crew members must be thoroughly briefed on all material safety data sheets for the chemicals that will be used, and be trained before operating equipment. Long pants, long sleeves, eye goggles and waterproof, chemical resistant gloves should be used to prevent contact with splashed chemicals. Footwear must protect the feet, ankles and lower legs and be waterproof and chemical resistant. Place all equipment, tools, and supplies near the stripping area.

**Surface Preparation** Proper preparation of the area is a key to problem free stripping. Remove all objects that can be moved. Have one or two workers begin immediately scraping any tape, labels, gum or other debris (scrape carefully to avoid gouging or scarring the floor). To prevent traffic from entering the area to be stripped, place caution cones and barricades at all entrances. Separate areas that you do not intend to strip by placing water containment devices in doorways and other boundaries. By using plastic sheeting and duct tape you can create barriers between the work area and the area not to be stripped. Dust mop the entire floor.

**Proper Application** Mix the stripper according to the manufacturer's directions. The solution may be dispensed from a mop bucket, a solution tank mounted on a floor machine, an automatic scrubber or a solution layer. Submerge a mop that has been dedicated to the use of applying stripper in the strip-

ping solution, without wringing place directly on the floor. Flood the floor with stripping solution, be careful, this will cause very slippery conditions. Allow the solution to dwell for at least 10-15 minutes, do not let it dry completely before you begin scrubbing.

**Little By Little** In order to maintain control of the stripping process, large floor areas should be done in manageable sections. Using a machine mounted with a stripping pad or brush, move the scrubber in sweeping, overlapping strokes. When using an automatic scrubber, walk slowly behind doing a double pass over all areas with the squeegee up and the vacuum off. If you use a stripping machine, depending on the job, one pass will suffice. Scrub edges using a swivel brush or a black utility pad mounted on a handle. Pay close attention to edges since residue left on the edges can leave the entire floor looking bad.

**Test For Completion** Pull back the solution in a small area with a squeegee, slide a floor scraper along the floor, taking care not to gouge the floor. If emulsified floor finish appears on the blade the stripping process is not complete. The floor must be scrubbed again. When all areas are completely stripped remove the solution with a wet/dry vacuum or automatic scrubber. If excessive finish is left on the floor, it may be necessary to reapply the stripping solution since floor finish strippers can only penetrate so many layers of finish per application. When scrubbing and retrieving of the solution is complete, immediately rinse the floor with clean water by either mopping or using an automatic scrubber. If using a caustic stripper, like Pro Line Rescue, a second rinse is necessary. Search for left over finish and remove with a floor scraper or scrubbing pad. Remove all containment devices and plastic barriers being careful not to allow solution to drain onto the floor.

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**The Finishing Touch** Thoroughly saturate a fresh mop in clean water and wring completely dry. Use to mop up any squeegee or dry solution marks or lines. Remaining marks or lines can be removed by hand scrubbing. This is the last chance to erase stripping-solution marks before finish is applied. Make one last thorough inspection of the floor, paying attention to solution that may “run out” from under baseboards. When you are satisfied that the floor is entirely clear of old finish and thoroughly dry, the floor is ready for the finishing process to begin. By following these simple procedures many of the headaches associated with the stripping process are eliminated.

## Making Safety a Priority

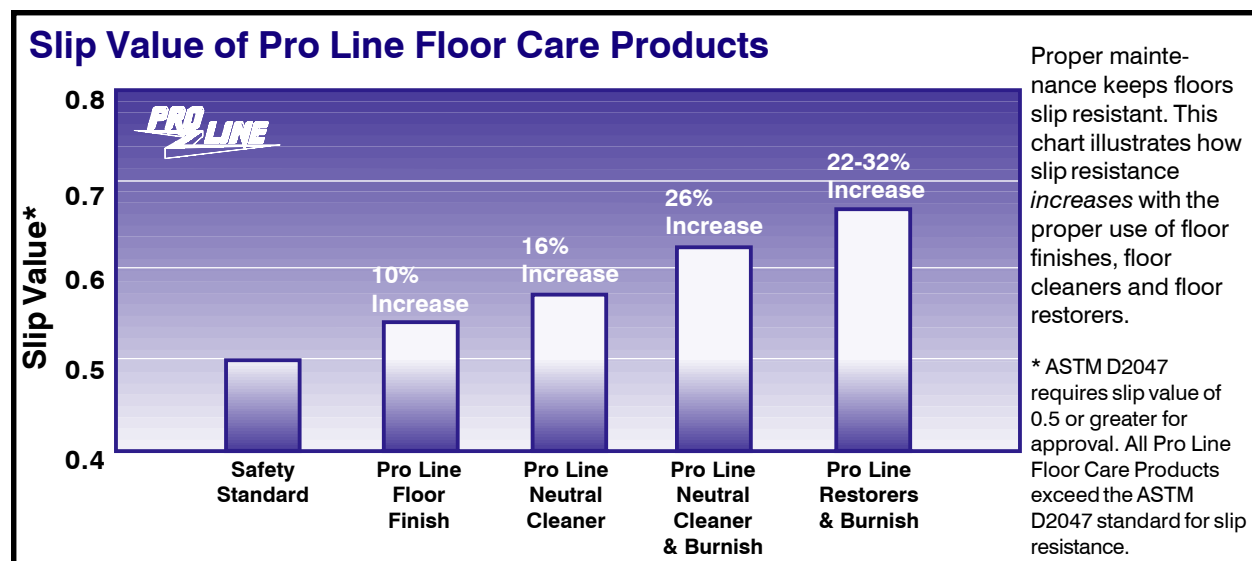
New government regulations, increased costs and an increase in lawsuits have created a challenge for businesses. The challenge is to avoid the costs and downtime associated with injuries and so-called injuries incurred during a slip and fall.

According to the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of Labor Statistics, slip and falls on a level surface occur approximately 165,000 times every year. Add to that figure the thousands of injuries that occur annually in the public sector and the scope of the problem becomes very real. To prevent litigation there are several things that can be done:

*"Slips and falls on a level surface occur approximately 165,000 times every year."*

1. Be certain that the floors are properly cared for. Keeping the floor clean and dry is of utmost importance.
2. Proper floor mats at the entrances that will not only remove dirt from shoes but also water. Entry mats must be long enough to allow several footsteps *per foot* to efficiently remove soil and water.
3. Use floor products that are highly slip resistant.
4. Institute a program that enables quick clean up of spills and setup of proper warning devices.
5. Have appropriate wet floor signs or cones on hand throughout the facility so that workers do not have to hunt for them thereby allowing more opportunity for an accident.

Instituting the above safety precautions can reduce liability and even allow for obtaining a discount on worker's compensation and liability premiums.



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