

FLOOR STRIPPERS

Q & A

Frequently Asked Questions...

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I need to strip an asbestos-containing tile floor. What are the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommended guidelines for stripping this type of floor?

There are a number of procedures and guidelines to follow:

The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recommends that school officials, building owners and custodial/maintenance staff consider the following basic guidelines when stripping wax or finish coat from asbestos-containing floor coverings:

- 1.AVOID STRIPPING FLOORS. Stripping of floors should be done as infrequently as possible -- perhaps once or twice or less per year depending on circumstances. The frequency should be carefully considered as floor maintenance schedules or contracts are written or renewed.
- 2.PROPERLY TRAIN STAFF. Custodial or maintenance staff who strip floors should be trained to operate properly and safely the machines, pads and floor care chemicals used at the facility.
- 3.FOLLOW APPROPRIATE WORK PRACTICE. Custodial or maintenance staff who strip floors should follow appropriate work practices, such as those recommended here, under informed supervision. Directions from floor tile and floor wax product manufacturers on proper maintenance procedures should be consulted.
- 4.STRIP FLOORS WHILE WET. The floor should be kept adequately wet during the stripping operation. DO NOT perform dry stripping. Prior to machine operation, an emulsion of chemical stripper in water is commonly applied to the floor with a mop to soften the wax or finish coat. After stripping and before application of the new wax, the floor should be thoroughly cleaned, while wet.
- 5.RUN MACHINE AT SLOW SPEED. If the machine used to remove the wax or finish coat has variable speeds, it should be run at slow speed (about 175-190 rpm) during the stripping operation.
- 6.SELECT THE LEAST ABRASIVE PAD POSSIBLE. EPA recommends that the machine be equipped with the least abrasive pad possible to strip wax or finish coat from asbestos-containing floors.
- 7.DO NOT OVERSTRIP FLOORS. Stop stripping when the old surface coat is removed. Overstripping can damage the floor and may cause the release of asbestos fibers. Do NOT operate a floor machine with an abrasive pad on unwaxed or unfinished floors.

REMEMBER: Improperly removing asbestos-containing floor covering could result in the release of high levels of asbestos. EPA recommends that you leave asbestos-containing floor covering in place, provided the material is in good condition. However, proper maintenance procedures, such as those outlined above, should always be followed.

Having good information before you begin stripping a floor is critical. What questions should I ask when choosing a stripper?

- 1.What type of floor are you stripping? Alkaline-sensitive floors such as rubber and linoleum should not be stripped with high pH, alkaline strippers.
- 2.What type of environment are you working in? Will people other than the floor crew be present? Hospital and nursing homes may need to be stripped with a low odor product like [Xlerate™ \(#2917\)](#).

3. How many coats of finish will you be removing? When was the floor last stripped? Was a semi-permanent seal used? Answers to these questions will steer you toward a particular product and give you an idea as to the amount of time the job will require.

4. What type of equipment do I have at my disposal? A heavy swing machine or large auto-scrubber will make fast work of most strip-outs.

Can I strip sensitive floors such as linoleum, rubber and marble?

It is possible but proper care must be exercised. First, only use a solvent stripper. Avoid high alkaline strippers such as Super Stripper. A good choice is [Speed Stripper \(#2888\)](#). Test in a small area first to determine the least amount of stripper that can be used to get the job done. Do not let the stripper dwell for more than a few minutes before scrubbing. Finally, be sure to rinse very well with [Nu-Tral Cleaner \(#507\)](#).

If my stripper isn't working at the recommended label dilution, should I increase the concentration?

Increasing the concentration can work with most "solvent strippers" such as [Speed Stripper \(#2888\)](#). However, with alkaline strippers such as [Super Stripper \(#2900\)](#), using more product actually decreases effectiveness. Stay with the 1:4 dilution ratio on the label.

What water temperature should I use when diluting stripper solution?

Warm water (~80°F or 26°C) generally works best. Hot water usually creates a very strong odor and reduces effectiveness because the most common solvent used in strippers (butyl) is very volatile and quickly evaporates from solution under high temperatures. Cold water doesn't contribute to odor problems but does reduce stripping effectiveness. Warm water is the best compromise.

Should I use vinegar to rinse the floor after stripping?

This is one of those old wives' tales that still hangs on with some people. Vinegar is not an effective rinse aid. Essential recommends using one or two ounces of [Nu-Tral Cleaner \(#507\)](#) as your final rinse additive. This serves to remove alkaline stripper residue and dirt from the floor. Vinegar does not remove dirt and becomes ineffective at neutralizing the longer you mop without changing your water.

What coverage rate should I expect from a stripper?

One gallon of stripper concentrate diluted with 4 parts water will strip approximately 500-1000 square feet.

How does a stripper actually remove floor finish?

There are basically two mechanisms that occur simultaneously to remove finish. The first involves amine (usually MEA) attacking the zinc crosslinking. This unlocks the polymers and improves the performance of the second mechanism. Alkaline builders and caustic are sometimes used to assist in this process. The second mechanism involves solvent (usually glycol ethers and/or alcohols) that dissolve and reliquify the finish. Together, these two mechanisms strip the finish. Surfactants are also used to assist in "wetting" the finish film.