



Understanding Floor Maintenance Contractors

Slip and Fall Prevention



Understanding Floor Care Contractors

Most contractors responsible for floor cleaning and maintenance are referred to as Building Maintenance Services (BMS). When hiring this service, it is important to understand the scope of services and BMS responsibilities as it pertains to floor care and slip and fall prevention. This document focuses on public access buildings such as offices within commercial real estate.



The following considerations are key when using BMS for floor care.

- Agree on the services and terms and conditions in the contract and/or floor care plan.
- Understand the services the contractor provides and if they meet the needs of floor appearance and slip and fall prevention.
- Coordinate the general daily cleaning schedule (preferably to be performed after hours) with building business activities.
- Monitor work of the contractor for quality and effectiveness.
- Agree on who will supply equipment and cleaning agents.
- Document all services.

Services

The following are typical floor maintenance services:

- Daily dust and damp mopping, spill cleanup, spot cleaning, and monitoring of floors and mats during wet weather events by day porters in public areas, entrances, lobbies, stairs, halls and restrooms. Day porters may not always be part of the contracted services, but some local ordinances require one for buildings over 100,000 square feet.
- Night cleaning that includes dust mopping plus wet mopping, scrubbers, polishing and burnishing.
- Generally, no refinishing of sealers or coating is done by BMS, but these services can be obtained through specialty contractors. Natural stone flooring does not need coatings. Before accepting this service, identify the flooring material and contact the manufacturer or the [Natural Stone Institute](#) to verify cleaning and coating needs. See more details in our [Floor Cleaning and Maintenance guide](#).
- Those who offer to strip, coat and/or seal may do so for the purpose of generating extra work for an additional cost. Applying unnecessary coatings or wax may create slippery conditions.
- Most BMS do not perform slip-resistance testing.

Ensuring Effective Floor Cleaning

Floor cleaning and maintenance are generally done for appearance, but the most important purpose is slip and fall prevention. Monitoring the quality of floor-cleaning services is the responsibility of the building owner who contracted the service, unless a leasing agreement states otherwise.

Monitor floors for smears or streaking, which can be an indicator of dirty mop water or improper mixture or type of cleaning solution. Most flooring manufacturers recommend a mild detergent cleaning agent that is approximately 7pH. With a clean water mixture, the floors should not streak. If this condition occurs, consult with the contractor. See more details in our [Floor Cleaning and Maintenance guide](#). Other potential factors to discuss may include:

- Are cleaning agents proper for the flooring type?
- Are proper rinsing procedures being followed for the type of cleaning agent?
- How often are mop heads replaced? Periodically inspect the contractor's janitorial closet to check mop condition/storage and whether there is old mop water in the buckets. (See *Figure 1*.)



Figure 1

Request a written floor care plan from the BMS or other floor care contractor that outlines:

- Schedule of cleaning methods
- Type of cleaning
- Cleaning agents to be used

The plan should align with the specifics of the building's floors and possible contaminants.

Documentation

Stay on top of the cleaning services being done. Require the floor cleaning contractor to document all services via a [Daily Floor Maintenance Log](#), and include this requirement in the service contract.

Risk Transfer

Like any other vendor or contractor, BMS involves responsibilities and liabilities associated with a business relationship. Risk transfer can be accomplished through the use of contracts where both parties agree to the assignment of responsibilities and liabilities.

Key components of risk transfer for floor maintenance and building services may include:

- Contract that outlines:
 - Insurance requirements for the vendor or contractor
 - Additional insured status
 - Indemnification provisions
- Obtaining certificates of insurance from the contractor
- Careful review of contracts you are asked to sign, with input by legal counsel

Learn more about [managing slip and fall risks](#) at cna.com/riskcontrol (US) or cnacanada.ca (Canada).