

The Real Cost of Dust Mops

Dust mops have long been a staple of the cleaning industry. Inexpensive and widely available, the tool can be found in nearly every janitor's closet. While parts can be purchased for a few dollars each, maintenance, frequent replacement, lost productivity, damaged floors and poor indoor air quality quickly add a few zeros to the end of that figure.

High-Maintenance Mops

Aside from its low price, the dust mop is far from appealing. Employees typically require a good deal of training and supervision in order to use and maintain them properly. Dust mopping simply rearranges dirt and particulate matter, leaving dirty lines up and down the floors. This left-behind dust is then worked into the wet mop or back into the shoes of the employees, redistributing it throughout the building. Even with proper use, pushing around dust scuffs and scrapes finished floors, leaving them dull much sooner than with other cleaning methods.

Dust mop heads become soiled very quickly, and cleaning them is a messy job. One option is to shake the mop head – throwing dirt, dust, spores, hair, dander and other particulates into the breathing space of the user. If the mop head still won't come clean, it has to be removed by hand, soaked in soapy water overnight, rinsed thoroughly and dried before being used again. After only a few rounds, the head will need to be replaced. Adding to the workload, heads, frames and handles are often sold separately, leaving room for error when it comes to matching existing equipment.

If hand washing isn't an option, the user must contract a cleaning company to provide the service. This can get quite costly and results in downtime when deliveries don't arrive as scheduled. Furthermore, the user must store soiled mop heads between pick-ups.

Some distributors sell dust mop oil, a mineral-based oil that helps dust mop heads attract dust while staying cleaner longer. There are a few major drawbacks to using dust mop oil: It is highly flammable, it can damage floor finishes and employees must be trained to apply it properly as over-application renders the mop head unusable.

Dust mop treatment solutions are also offered by the industry. Promising the same

benefits as dust mop oil, these products require equal caution but even more work. The solution must be measured carefully based on the type and length of mop head, how often it is treated and when it was last treated. Once carefully applied, the mop head is rolled and stored in a plastic bag overnight. As with oils, the proper formula must be chosen for the type of floor being cleaned. Using the wrong solution results in damaged floors.

Dust Mops and Indoor Air Quality

Indoor air quality (IAQ) is one of the top concerns in the jan/san industry today. Unfortunately, many people fail to realize dust mops counter any clean-air efforts they might be making.

When dust mopping, dirt and other particulate matter are simply redistributed and sent into the air. Bacteria, spores, mold and dander hover for a few hours, triggering symptoms like headaches, allergies and asthma attacks. The particulates then settle on desktops, tables and back on the floor. Dust bunnies reappear after only 24 hours, making the area look as though it was never cleaned. And because visible dust is the #1 complaint of office workers and school staff, it makes good sense to put a stop to this dusty cycle.

Simple Solution

This problem isn't as tough as it may seem. In fact, it may be solved by using a tool you already have – a vacuum. The right type of vacuum will be more effective than dust mopping hard floors, keeping dust bunnies away for 72 hours (three times longer than with a dust mop.)

There are a few key features to look for when choosing a vacuum that will be effective on both carpet and hard flooring. First, choose a backpack-style vacuum for maximum mobility and productivity. This allows the user to cover more area in a shorter amount of time and is especially important in schools, where 69% of space is covered with hard flooring.

Next, look for a brand that offers attachments specifically designed to clean hard floors. The hard floor tool typically features one smooth felt edge and one scalloped felt edge. The scalloped design glides over the floor more easily and accommodates larger pieces of garbage.

Make sure the vacuum comes with a warranty. Most come with one-year warranties, while the highest quality machines carry three-year warranties.

Most importantly, choose a vacuum with an advanced filtration system. Multiple filters are the key to dust removal and improved IAQ. The vacuum's filters should be layered micro filters, able to trap particles invisible to the naked eye, down to 1 micron in size. (By comparison, a human hair is 10 microns.) Also, insist on micro filter bags, which trap up to 2400% more dust than single-ply bags. Additional filters at the entry and exit points of the vacuum are also ideal. Finally, check the vacuum for sound design to ensure there are no gaps in the construction, which could allow particulates to escape.

It All Adds Up

After considering the extra costs associated with dust mops, it's clear they aren't as cheap as their price tags promise. Not only that, they don't effectively remove dust. Replacing one's dust-mop arsenal with a high-quality vacuum is the move that really makes sense.