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Matting Systems Should Be an Important Part of Any Hotel's Green Plan

By Robert Kravitz
12/04/2007

NATIONAL REPORT—Visitors to the Gaia Napa Valley Hotel and Spa won't find the usual Gideon Bible in the nightstand drawer. Instead, on the bureau will be a copy of *An Inconvenient Truth*, former Vice President Al Gore's book on global warming. Guests will also find the Gaia equipped with waterless urinals, solar lighting, recycled paper and other green features. Similar features are found just 35 miles south at San Francisco's Orchard Garden Hotel, which competes for customers with neighboring luxury hotels like the Ritz-Carlton and the Fairmont.

The Gaia and the Orchard Garden Hotel are among a growing number of hotels that are incorporating green measures into their facilities. Mounting concerns about global warming and environmental sustainability have helped push the green movement forward, with many cities now offering incentives to encourage such investments. Some hotels are seeking LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) certification, which indicates that a building has included in its design such environmentally friendly features as recycled construction materials, energy-efficient systems, and water-conserving fixtures.

And their customers are calling for it. The U.S. Travel Data Center estimates that more than 43 million travelers are "ecologically concerned." And an increasing number of travelers are looking for ways to travel greener, including choosing hotels that incorporate many environmentally friendly features.

What Features Make a Hotel Green?

In addition to building design, hotels striving to be environmentally conscious are incorporating many

green measures into the everyday activities of their hotels and their guests. Some of these steps include:

- Incorporating water- and energy-saving programs such as linen and towel reuse;
- Encouraging guests to conserve energy by turning off lights and the television and closing blinds when they leave the room;
- Adopting a recycling program throughout the hotel, including in guestrooms;
- Having a food waste program in place, such as composting;
- Choosing furniture, carpet, and drapes that release fewer volatile organic compounds (VOCs);
- Using green cleaning products and more efficient cleaning equipment; and
- Incorporating products and systems that reduce the need for cleaning, such as an effective matting system.

“Mats are an often overlooked area when hotels are thinking about ways to make their hotels green,” says Phyllis Lark, marketing assistant at Crown Mats and Matting, “but mats provide an important benefit by keeping soil and contaminants from entering the hotel in the first place.”

The less dirt and other debris “walked in,” the less cleaning that is necessary, which helps reduce the use of cleaning chemicals, water, and electricity.

Incorporating a Matting System

Any green strategy should include the implementation of a high-performance matting system. Effective, high-quality mats can help control soil and contaminants from entering a building and spreading throughout the facility. They also trap moisture and keep floor surfaces dry, presenting a nicer appearance for the hotel and preventing slips and falls for staff and guests. Effective matting systems help protect carpet and other flooring in the hotel from becoming damaged by soil and moisture, extending the life of the flooring. And mats can even help improve staff comfort and productivity when placed in areas where workers stand for long periods of time.

When placing mats at hotel entrances, the industry “Rule of 15” should be employed. This states that 15 feet of mat should run from outside to inside entryways. The type and length of mats include the following:

- Five feet of high-performance scraper mat should be placed directly outside entrances. This is the first line of defense, and up to 50 percent of soil and contaminants can be trapped here.
- Next, placed directly inside entrances, should be 5 feet of a combination scraper/wiper mat with dual-level construction, which traps soil and moisture and stores them below shoe level within the mat. This type of construction controls water seepage from the mat and keeps the surrounding interior floors dry.
- Directly following should be 5 feet of wiper mat, which will wipe off most of the remaining soil and moisture. Wiper mats are also an effective way to control dust, which can become airborne and affect indoor air quality.

“Choosing the right kind of mats for both inside and outside entryways helps provide a safe and effective surface for trapping soil and moisture,” Lark adds.

By employing the Rule of 15 and using high-performance matting systems, 90 percent of dirt, snow, water, and pollutants carried in on shoes can be controlled.

Performance Life of Mats

Part of any green building program is using products that reduce the need for landfills, and the extended life of high-performance mats help satisfy this objective. Some high-performance mats have a useful life of up to six years, whereas the ones with less-expensive construction have a performance life of 90 to 180 days. As the cheaper mats will need to be replaced more often, this presents a disposal issue.

Mats should be cleaned and maintained on a regular basis to retain their effectiveness and extend their useful life. They should be vacuumed at least once a day, and more often in heavy traffic areas. Mats should also be thoroughly cleaned periodically. If not properly maintained, the mats will actually start to release rather than trap soil and dust.

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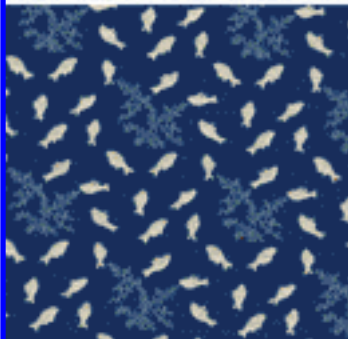
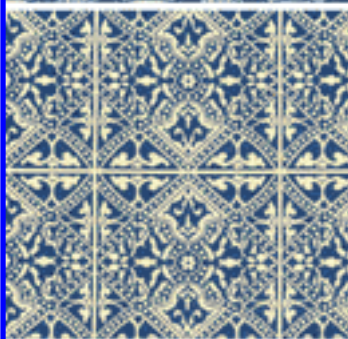
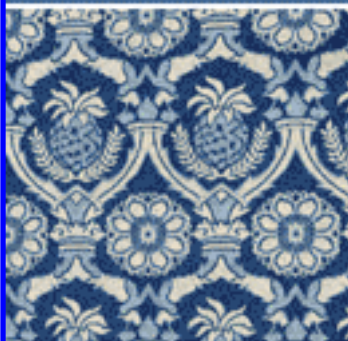
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