

## **CLEANING AND MAINTENANCE OF GRANBY ROCK & PRECAST TERRAZZO**

**Terrazzo** has many practical advantages over other materials; it is resistant to wear and tear, easy to clean and requires relatively little maintenance. Regular cleaning is important and should be carried out at intervals to suit the amount of wear the precast terrazzo product receives. When cleaned correctly terrazzo will keep the factory finish far longer.

The cleaner should be made aware of the inherent properties of Terrazzo in order to set up a cleaning regime to suit the product. Terrazzo consists of stone, brick and slate chippings, set into a cement based matrix which is finely ground and polished as part of the manufacturing process. The surface of the finished terrazzo is approximately 70% aggregate. Terrazzo is a “hard finish” and requires little protection against wear but does need it from staining of the surface. Protection by sealing is recommended. The use of a penetrating sealer can be applied on site as part of the final finishing process. The stone and cement sealers used are absorbed into the product, sealing off pores and hardening the surface to give greater resistance to dusting and staining. This operation may be renewed periodically throughout the life of the terrazzo.

**General cleaning** products must be checked for compatibility with precast terrazzo. When cleaning terrazzo it is the contents of the cleaning product that can cause problems. Acid or alkaline based cleaning agents that have a P.H. value other than 7 should not be used on precast terrazzo. Acidic preparations, even in diluted form, can etch the surface and completely destroy the cement base. Alkaline liquids and powders are also detrimental, constant treatment with this type of cleaning agent will eventually lead to the surface disintegrating and causing pitting in the terrazzo which will lead to severe dirt retention.

Avoid using agents with high soap content as there is a risk of the precast terrazzo being slippery if walked upon. Disinfectants should not be used to clean precast terrazzo; phenol or cresol will stain terrazzo. Metallic brushes or wire wool pads should never be used on terrazzo and the coarser grades of nylon pad e.g. black pads will scratch the surface causing it to dust and hold dirt. For daily maintenance mild abrasive white nylon pads will give the best results.

**Cleaning stages** are as follows:-

1. Remove spillages that may cause staining immediately as they become more difficult to remove the longer they are left. Stubborn areas of dirt caused by sweets or

chewing gum should first be removed with a pallet knife or similar utensil. Some stains may have penetrated the surface and abrasive sanding may be necessary to remove them. This will scratch the surface of the terrazzo and should only be carried out by someone with the expertise to ensure that the original finish is reproduced after stain removal.

2. Sweep regularly to remove all surface dirt and loose materials with a soft hand brush. This will prevent grit or other foreign objects e.g. screws or nails causing scratches in the surface which will hold dirt and look unsightly.

3. Scrub the precast terrazzo using a solution of clean water and neutral cleaning agent (P.H.7] mixed strictly in accordance with the manufacturers' instructions. Best results on dirty terrazzo are usually obtained by using red nylon abrasive pads for wet use. Constant use with red pads is not necessary if the terrazzo is cleaned regularly and is not recommended as it will wear the terrazzo and have the effect of prematurely aging the terrazzo. Attention should be paid to the pads used to clean; these must also be cleaned regularly to remove the build up of dirt.

When cleaning precast terrazzo by hand it is essential that the cleaning water is changed often to ensure removal of dirt and eliminate unsightly cloth or mop lines.

4. Polishing or burnishing precast terrazzo will enhance the factory finish of the product. The polishing is normally done using nylon pads and the grade used should be no coarser than red. A terrazzo [marble] maintainer with a polymer additive may be spray applied during the final polish to further enhance the natural finish and give added protection to the surface. The terrazzo must be thoroughly clean before applying a maintainer as polymers may give an artificially good appearance and cover up a dirty finish. This could result in re-polishing work being necessary to remove several coats of polymer and clean the dirt from the terrazzo.

Regular cleaning by these recommended methods will assist the natural wearing properties of terrazzo. Most problems with stains and dirt are relatively easy to overcome, particularly if they are treated early. Unfortunately constant staining and excessive wear and tear is something that cannot be removed by cleaning and if the precast terrazzo is allowed to fall into disrepair a terrazzo specialist from the National Federation of Terrazzo Marble and Mosaic Specialists may have to be called in to carry out the repairs and re polishing. This can be avoided by taking care of the product and carrying out regular maintenance to prolong its life.