Carpets are the only textile products on which people walk. They are the only products used in a commercial environment that will often cost more to maintain than the initial purchase price. Consequently, the three most critical factors contributing to a successful carpet installation are:

- Carpet construction.
- Installation.
- Maintenance.

Specification of any one of these three elements without knowledge or consideration of the other two will increase the risk that the carpet will not perform to potential or expectation. However, a well-planned maintenance programme is often overlooked.

A properly planned and executed carpet maintenance programme will achieve two important results:

- It will keep your carpet looking good as long as possible, preserving the image and prestige of your company or business.
- The longer a carpet lasts, the less it costs. This eliminates all the extra costs associated with replacing a carpet, for example, cost of removal and disposal, installation, disruption to business, etc.

A maintenance programme may be carried out by in-house staff, by specialist outside suppliers, or a combination of both. A reputable carpet cleaning firm (preferably industry accredited, e.g. ACCI) should pre-inspect the carpet, identify the carpet and construction, evaluate cleaning needs and then recommend the most appropriate cleaning methods, procedures and timing. (Also consult AS/NZS 3733: 1995.)

The Three P's

For ease of use, we have grouped proper carpet maintenance into three basic categories, called the three P's:

- Preventative Care.
- Prompt Action.
- Periodic Maintenance.

1. Introduction

2. Preventative Care

This is the first important step in long-term appearance retention, and falls into two categories: planning and preventative measures.

2a. Planning For Success

Good carpet maintenance begins before the carpet is laid. The following variables all affect how the carpet will perform over its intended life. As a general rule, functional requirements should prevail over aesthetics.

Type of Soil.

- This is affected by geographic locations in and around the commercial environment.
- Has the soil been “walked-in” or is it food based?

Traffic Patterns and Traffic Volume.

Traffic is not distributed evenly throughout the building. Entrances, elevators, and corridors have a high volume of traffic, yet may be only 20% of the building. Single offices and conference rooms will have lighter traffic. It is important to draw a floor plan and analyse different areas. (See Section 3a - Vacuuming, or Consult Table 2.1 AS/NZS 3733: 1995.)

The correct carpet should be specified.

The following issues should all be considered prior to the installation of the carpet:

- COLOUR AND DESIGN.
- Colour and design can minimise visible soil.
- Very light and very dark colours reveal soil.
- Mid-toned and patterned carpets hide soil.

- CARPET CONSTRUCTION.
- Yarn quality and carpet construction are vital.
- Dirt doesn't easily penetrate denser pile weights.

- FIBRE POLYMER
- Fibre polymer is the basic building block of all carpets. A fibre polymer with a dense, tight structure such as Invista Type 6,6 nylon produces the most resilient carpet fibre. Invista Antron Legacy™ nylon will withstand the damaging effects of soil.

- FIBRE ENGINEERING
- Fibre engineering determines the amount of surface area of the fibre. The smaller the surface area, the less opportunity for soil to adhere.
Invista Antron Legacy™ nylon has a smooth, dense surface coupled with unique geometric shape which diffuses light, so soil is less visible.

**Installation.**

Professional carpet installation should be in accordance with AS/ NZS 2455 and be appropriate to both the type of environment and subsequent cleaning methods.

**Warranty.**


**2b. Preventative Measures.**

It is easier to keep dirt out of the building than it is to get it out of the carpet. The following are important preventative measures.

**Soil Prevention.**

Good carpet maintenance actually begins outside the building. The pavement outside entranceways, parking areas and other walkways should be swept regularly to minimise the amount of dirt and soil which can be tracked into the building.

**Soil Barriers**

Soil barriers provide the first-line protection against tracked-in dirt. There are many types of soil barriers available which have varying degrees of effectiveness. The most widely used techniques are walk-off mats, grates and removable elevator carpets which help collect abrasive dirt before it can be tracked through the building.

Soil barriers must be large enough for at least two or three steps to be taken across them before reaching the carpet. They must be vacuumed daily and cleaned frequently so that they themselves do not become a source of soil.

Ontera recommends **W.O.M.B.A.T.™**

W.O.M.B.A.T.™ stands for Walk-off Modular Barrier Anti-soiling Trap, the unique commercial entry-way dirt and soil barrier from Ontera.

The vast majority of the soil and staining of carpet in a commercial building results from dirt, grit and moisture that is ‘walked’ into the building at the entrance area. Research has shown that up to 80% of soil that stains a carpet is tracked in on the feet of people entering the building and over 1kg of dirt can be tracked into a building by 1000 people going through an entrance over a 20 day work period.

The Ontera W.O.M.B.A.T.™ system is the same dimension as conventional Ontera Modular Carpet products. Therefore W.O.M.B.A.T.™ is an easy-to-install internal entrance mat to remove the residual dirt and grit from both foot and wheeled traffic, which will minimise the cleaning requirements and maximise the appearance retention and expected life of a carpet installation.

**W.O.M.B.A.T.™ is available in two highly versatile colours**

W.O.M.B.A.T.™ is available in highly versatile black and blue colours – Blackbat 880 and Bluebat 869 to compliment any entrance environment.

**Chair pads**

Specially made plastic mats under chairs and desks prevent castors from grinding dirt into a carpet over and over again, and prevent fibre damage and shedding.

**Restricted Area**

Restricted eating, drinking and smoking areas will help keep some difficult kinds of stains and soils to limited areas.

**Filter Maintenance**

Replace or clean filters on air handling equipment on a regular basis. Not only does this help keep carpets at their best, but also the general indoor air quality is maintained.

All of the above are the first steps to an effective maintenance programmes, which adds to the long-term value of the whole carpet installation.
The second step to getting the most from your carpet is prompt attention. Again, this falls into two categories: vacuuming and spot cleaning. Both these tasks must be conducted on a regular basis.

3a. Vacuuming

Prompt and regular vacuuming after spills or after heavy use is the single most important component of the carpet maintenance programme. It is the primary and most economical means of removing dry soil, and should be the basis of effective soil control.

For best results, upright vacuum cleaners with a roller brush or canister cleaners with a “power head” should be used. The brush action also helps to restore carpet pile appearance in high traffic areas. Ontera does not recommend the use of backpack type cleaners.

Follow these guidelines for good general vacuuming:

• Select professional equipment which is appropriate to the installation, traffic pattern and volume.
• Use vacuums with fine filters or water scrubbing air filters. (HEPA – High Efficiency Particle Air filter preferred.)
• Adjust the height of the machine setting to suit the pile height of the carpet.
• Vacuum slowly and thoroughly, making three to five passes over an area.
• Empty vacuum bags frequently.
• Replace filters regularly.
• Keep equipment in good repair and maintain an adequate supply of spare parts.

Vacuuming Techniques

Requirements may vary depending on traffic rating, carpet construction and health considerations. The maintenance schedule should be divided into two parts: high traffic areas, and moderate to light traffic areas. (Consult Table 2.1 AS/NZS 3733: 1995.)

High Traffic Areas

Entrances, lobbies, reception areas, lifts and most corridors require special attention. Vacuum daily using equipment with a good brush action and high airflow.

Moderate to Light Traffic Areas

Conference rooms, offices and storage areas may be vacuumed less frequently, but generally at least every other day. Single motor uprights with brush action are adequate.

Note: The objective of efficient vacuuming is to collect as many small particles as possible and prevent redistribution of fine particles from the carpet into the air, contributing to better indoor air quality. Most modern vacuums can effectively remove collect particles as small as one micron in size. However, normal vacuuming will not remove oil-based soils.

Use Capture™ to remove oil or water based stains.

Normal vacuuming will only remove dry soil, sand and normal surface debris. Any oily or water-based materials will stick to the carpet fibre and any moist spots and spills will not vacuum away because the fibre is coated with oil. Not only does this cause the fibre to become soiled, it also sticks to other fibres, which can cause matting, packing or crushing of the fibre. Capture™ is designed to absorb these oil-based substances into a particle that can be easily vacuumed away. Consequently, the soil that has adhered to the fibre will be removed. After cleaning with Capture™, vacuuming will remove more dry soil because the fibre is not matted or crushed, so that vacuuming becomes more efficient.
3b. Spot Cleaning (Stain Removal.)

Most stains can be avoided or removed by immediate or at least daily treatment. If not, they can become permanent stains. A Spot Removal Procedures Guide is provided in Tables 1 and 2 of section 5, which outlines specific cleaning methods for common spots and stains.

**Ontera Recommends Capture™ Soil Absorbent Powder and Pre-spray.**

Ontera recommends the use of Capture™ soil absorbent powder and pre-spray for the removal of most spots and stains. It is preferable to adopt a regular spot removal procedure. This can be done quickly and easily prior to daily vacuum cleaning.

The steps for spot and stain removal using Capture™ and pre-spray are as follows:

- Ensure all liquid spillages are absorbed using a tissue or cloth and allow stain to dry.
- Apply pre-spray to stain.
- Brush back and forth, side-to-side.
- Apply Capture™ soil absorbent powder.
- Brush in Capture™.
- Wait 30 minutes.
- Vacuum off.

A trained person assigned to the task of daily stain removal can usually deal with 90% of stains (such as beverage, food spills, oils or greases). The remainder, such as nail varnish, paint, shoe polish etc., will require the services of a professional cleaner.

Regular vacuuming and prompt attention to spills and stain removal are key to maintaining the appearance of the carpet. However, periodic cleaning is the only way to effectively avoid soil becoming deeply embedded in the carpet, and is an integral part of an effective maintenance programme.

NB: Long-term periodic maintenance should only be carried out by carpet cleaning professionals or specially trained in-house staff.

Periodic maintenance improves the appearance and extends the life of the carpet in two important ways:

- It removes oily, sticky soil
- It removes abrasive particles.

There are a wide variety of methods available. Table 2.1 AS/NZS 3733:1995 details frequency of cycle and Table 2.2 AS/NZS 3733:1995 summarises techniques versus carpet construction and suitability.

**Periodic Maintenance Methods.**

The two most commonly used methods to provide periodic maintenance are Absorbent Powder Cleaning and Hot Water Extraction.

**4a. Absorbent Powder Cleaning**

The absorbent powders used are inert substances which are impregnated with a mixture of water, surfactant, organic solvent and fragrance. They are sprinkled onto the pile and brushed into the carpet. The powder absorbs greasy solids from the surface of the fibre and the residual product is vacuumed away.

**Capture™ - Ontera’s only recommended carpet maintenance system.**

The Capture™ cleaning system is Ontera’s only recommended carpet maintenance system. It has been developed to ensure optimum levels of appearance retention and carpet performance throughout the life of the installation.

Alternative methods often leave chemical residues on the fibre which mask the MilliGuard™ soil repellent treatment rendering it ineffective. This can cause rapid resoiling of the carpet as well as matting down of the fibres.

Also, wet cleaning methods can leave relatively high moisture levels within the carpet fibre, which can encourage the growth of mould, bacteria or other biological organisms. Conversely, since the Capture™ cleaning system leaves no moisture or harmful residue, it does not create the environment necessary for the growth of these organisms. Furthermore Capture™ absorbs allergens just like it does dirt and soil, effectively reducing pollen, mould, mildew and dust mites.

A further advantage of Capture™ maintenance system is that since the carpet is not dampened during the cleaning process, it can be walked on during and immediately after cleaning.
4b. Hot Water Extraction

Hot Water Extraction may be required for areas where very heavy soiling has occurred (e.g. entrance halls, hotel lobbies etc.) The combination of high mechanical cleaning action followed by the wet shampoo method followed by hot water extraction (without shampoo) and, where necessary a conditioning rinse, can be more effective than absorbent powder cleaning in these areas.

Cleaning products and general cleaning recommendations.

- Before starting, test how the selected cleaning method will affect the colour on a hidden carpet sample or area.
- Carpet should always be thoroughly pre-vacuumed.
- Never use bleach or products that contain bleach (see below).
- Carpet shampoos must be anionic, non-ionic or combinations thereof with a maximum pH rating of 8.
- Use conditioning rinse to return the carpet to neutral pH.
- Use cleaning agents sparingly. This will protect your carpet installation and minimise possible odours.
- Never walk on a wet or moist carpet and allow to dry completely.
- Good airflow and ventilation will reduce drying time and minimise possible odour. With proper ventilation, drying should take up to 12 hours, and should never require more than 24 hours.

Bleach should not be used on any nylon carpet.

Please note: Bleach is not compatible with any form of nylon, including solution dyed nylon, as bleach attacks the molecular structure of the polymer, and leads to early degradation of the nylon. Invista, the largest manufacturer of nylon in the world, state the following with regard to the use of bleach on nylon carpets:

“Invisia does not recommend the use of bleach on nylon carpets, including solution-dyed types, as this can cause severe degradation of the fibre, resulting in premature pile wear and fibre loss.”

The use of bleach will also invalidate the product warranty.

The following charts list recommended cleaning procedures for common spots and stains. Simply locate the stain (listed alphabetically) in table 1, and then find the appropriate cleaning solution (numbered 1 to 6) in table 2.

Note: Where “Pro” is indicated seek the help of a professional carpet cleaner.

Table 1. Spot and Stain Removal Guide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spot or Stain</th>
<th>Removal Method</th>
<th>Spot or Stain</th>
<th>Removal Method</th>
<th>Spot or Stain</th>
<th>Removal Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asphalt</td>
<td>3,1</td>
<td>Furniture Polish</td>
<td>3,1</td>
<td>Paint (stained)</td>
<td>3,Pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>nEthanol</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Pot cleaner</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Berries</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Water (hot)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blood</td>
<td>1,Pro</td>
<td>Grease</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rubber Cement 3,1</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Butter/Margarine</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Grease</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rust</td>
<td>6,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carbon Black</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Hair Dye</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Scour Powder</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chewing Gum</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Household Cement</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Shoe Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chocolate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ice Cream</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Spots</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clay</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ink (ballpoint)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Shoe Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ink (ballpoint pen)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>(pencil)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cola Drinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ink (hot tip)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Soft Drinks</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cooling Oil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ink</td>
<td>1,Pro</td>
<td>Spots</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cough Syrup</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lacquer</td>
<td>3,1</td>
<td>Steak Sauce</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crease</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Makeup Foundation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tar</td>
<td>3,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crème de Menthe</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mascara</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Tea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dust and Allergens</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mayopaste</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Toothpaste</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eye</td>
<td>1,Pro</td>
<td>Methylsaline</td>
<td>1,Pro</td>
<td>Tomato Juice</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egg</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Unins</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excrement</td>
<td>2,1</td>
<td>Milk</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Varnish</td>
<td>3,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foot Colouring</td>
<td>1,Pro</td>
<td>Mixed Drinks</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vase</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foods (greasy)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Meat</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vomit</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foods (general)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Nail Polish</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Wax (pastes)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit Juice</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Oil</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wax (pastes)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Orange Drink</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Wax</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Furniture Polish</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Paint</td>
<td>3,1</td>
<td>Wax</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2. Cleaning agents for removal of spots and stains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spot or Stain</th>
<th>Removal Method</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Capture Carpet Spot &amp; soil removers. Brush gently into carpet pile until the spot of soil is absorbed by the porous particles. Wait 15 - 30 mins and vacuum. (Absorb wet spills and allow to dry before using.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Freeze with ice cubes. Shatter with blunt object. Vacuum chips. Apply solvent. Wait several minutes and blot. Repeat if necessary.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Apply solvent. Wait several minutes. Blot, apply detergent, blot, wash.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Apply de-natured alcohol. Repeat if necessary. (Pre test to make sure carpet can handle alcohol.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Apply nail polish remover (non-oil) Blot and repeat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Apply rust remover or warm oxalic solution. Allow to stand for 15 minutes. Blot, apply water and blot.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
For more information on Capture™ Carpet Maintenance System or any other Ontera product ranges please call toll-free on: