



Facility Safety

## Floor Mats: Rental vs. Buying

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Did you know that to rent a 4' x 6' floor mat costs about \$5.00 per week or about \$260.00 annually. Most floor mat rental companies require a three year contract to lease their mats. Under this scenario the cost over a three year contract can be well over \$700.00. The unfortunate fact is that most companies that lease or rent their floor mats use more than one mat, so the financial impact is usually much greater. Add the following fees and the real expense for floor mats starts to snowball:

- Bogus "delivery fees" (Seriously, if I pick the mat up will these be waived?)
- Cleaning charges (If they don't clean the floor mats, will these also be waived? What am I paying for?)
- Fuel surcharges (Again, will these charges be waived if I decline delivery and cleaning?)
- Environmental charges (What's this for — global warming?)

When faced with the option of either purchasing or renting your floor mats the following question is often posed, "Who will clean the mats if I purchase them?" I would hazard a guess that regardless of whether one buys his entrance mats outright or chooses to enlist the services of a mat rental company, that the end user will still be tasked with periodically cleaning the mats.

To illustrate this point, consider that floor mat rental companies generally schedule their mat pick-ups once per week, every other week or on a monthly basis. During the span of time between mat pick-ups, the customer will often pay a contract cleaner or employee to clean the office spaces. The floor mats will normally be vacuumed whenever the cleaning takes place. This is an added expense of the floor mats that is often overlooked. Even if it only takes 30 minutes per week (6 minutes per day) to vacuum the floor mats, a worker paid \$10.00 per hour would spend 26 hours or cost approximately \$260.00 annually in hard dollars. It is true that this labor expense will be incurred regardless of whether the mats in place are rented or purchased outright. The point of this exercise is to eradicate the false premise of the question that no one will clean the floor mats if they are purchased. Truth be told, if the floor mats are being rented, the end user company is "paying twice" to clean the mats. The companies who purchase their floor mats only incur a single cleaning expense.

There are many other issues that a customer is often "forced" to accept when he decides to rent his entrance mats. For instance, most mat rental companies only offer a limited selection of floor mat sizes. As a result, the customer is often left with the decision of picking a door mat size that does not suit the aesthetic or functional requirements of his building. For instance, if a Class A building entrance requires a 9' x 11' sized entrance mat to properly safeguard against slip and falls, or to meet certain maintenance or aesthetic parameters, you will be hard-pressed to find a mat rental company that will "rent" this size of a floor mat. They will, however, offer to rent several 4' x 10' or 4' x 8' mats that can be placed next to each other to achieve the same or near same floor mat coverage for the area. The problem is that the size of each floor mat can deviate as much as 5% during the manufacturing process. What this means is that 3 each 4' x 10' sized mats placed side by side will no doubt be of different actual sizes. This eliminates any semblance of uniformity not to mention the increased tripping hazard should one mat move on top of another mat (Lawsuits are another hidden expense of choosing the wrong matting system). I ask you, "How many times have you entered a building and traversed across 3 or 4 mats placed end to end to cover a desired area?" Not a pretty sight. Not a great first impression — especially to someone looking to lease some space. Missed revenues or lower lease rates due to a poor first impression is yet another hidden cost to a poor choice in floor matting. Expect and demand more.

Another issue that is often faced when one rents floor mats is the limitation in the matting colors that are available. Mat rental companies offer a limited selection of "stock" colors. These stock colors are usually Black, Brown, Red/Black and Gray. Other colors are available; however, there is usually an additional charge for getting the color that you want if it is not a stock color. The reason that mat rental companies offer stock colors is so that they will require less of an inventory to service their entire customer base. This "common stocking" approach means that the mat picked up from one customer on a Monday can be cleaned and delivered to another customer on Tuesday and that mat can be cleaned and delivered on Wednesday and so on. This increased revenue is great for the mat rental company, but the increased launderings have a deleterious effect on the overall quality of the floor mat over time. The effects of accelerated launderings can cause the mat edges to ripple over time and also to cause the colors of the floor mat to fade or "wash-out." Who knows where the mat you are renting today was yesterday — perhaps a restroom, convenience store drink station, auto shop, etc. As a result, the mats used in a mat rental program will never be as nice as the first day they were put into service. The customer often finds that while the charge for mat service always seems to stay constant, the quality of the delivered product does not. Expect more and demand more.

The fact of the matter is that certain types of companies still need to rent their floor mats. Companies that must contend with petroleum, oils and lubricants like an automobile service station need to rent their floor mats. Companies that are faced with dirt and grimes that involve food or greases like restaurants can often be better served with a mat rental program. Floor mats subjected to these types of dirt require special cleaning. The majority of company types, however, do not have to deal with this type of dirt. They must merely safeguard against the garden variety types of dirt from landscaping materials, cigarette ashes and parking lots that tend to get tracked into their buildings.

That being said, there are hundreds of floor mats available today that will do a better job at stopping dirt at the door. Each matting manufacturer strives to make a floor matting product or products that will accomplish a specific objective (i.e., scrape, scrape and absorb, absorb, meet certain colors or sizes, etc.) The mats used in a rental program are primarily designed to be easy for the mat company to launder. These types of floor mats are also absorbent. However, rental floor mats just don't do a great job at trapping dirt. Consider that once that dirt gets into the building, it is incumbent upon the building maintenance staff to get it out of the building. That costs hard dollars. It makes better sense from a fiscal and a floor matting perspective to outfit the entrance area (where almost all of the dirt enters a building) with the most appropriate type of floor mat. Then, maintenance efforts can be focused on a concentrated area — the floor mat — rather than trying to track the dirt down from throughout the building.

The most appropriate type of floor matting system may include a scraper mat on the outside, a scrape and absorb type of matting in the vestibule area and a more absorbent type of matting on the inside. It

normally takes about 18 lineal feet to knock off about 75% of the soils and moisture off of the feet of people entering a building. Why not raise the bar for your building and demand functionality, aesthetics and cost savings as well.

When one considers the "hard dollars" associated with renting floor mats along with the more obscure costs of additional maintenance costs for using the wrong type of matting, along with the loss in curb appeal from using rental mats, the financial impact of renting floor mats can be devastating. A company renting 5 mats at \$5.00 per mat per week will spend nearly \$4,000.00 over a three year period. Purchasing the same mats (which by the way will last at least 3 years and closer to 6 years) will cost in the neighborhood of about \$700.00. You could literally pocket over \$3,000 in savings OR buy a new set of mats every 6 months OR better yet, choose to invest in a better matting program altogether. Most companies can get greater coverage and a better matting system for \$4,000.00. During these financially challenging times, it may be time to stop flushing your maintenance dollars away.

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