



## Natural Stone Care and Maintenance

A proper maintenance program is crucial for natural stone products, which are porous by nature and require a different maintenance program than traditional man-made ceramic tile.

Many of the cleaners acceptable for use on ceramic tile can stain, damage or dull stone. Natural stone should be cleaned with neutral cleaners. Stone cleaners should never contain acid or bleach. Even a light solution of vinegar and water, will etch and eventually damage natural stone. Dirt and dust will scratch the surface of stone. Hence, stone floors should be vacuumed or dust mopped frequently to remove abrasive agents from the stone surface.

### PRE-GROUT SEALING:

Sealing is strongly recommended for newly installed marble and other natural stone to provide maximum below surface stain protection.

A non-sanded grout is strongly recommended for natural stone installations. This type of grout has very fine particles of cement, polymers and color pigments that can penetrate the microscopic pores of the stone surface where they become trapped and appear as a stain in the stone. Therefore, all travertine, slate, tumbled stone and honed/flamed/unpolished granite should be sealed prior to the grouting process to protect them from staining. The application of a good quality sealer should be used as a grout sealer and applied again as the final sealing process once the installation is finished.

### SEALING:

A premium natural look penetrating/impregnating sealer is the normal choice on polished or honed marble, limestone, granite, or where the natural color of a slate is desired.

Penetrating/impregnating stone sealers are a no-sheen, natural look sealer that can be water-based or solvent-based, and are good for interior and exterior applications. Most quality sealers of this type are rated to protect the stone for several years. A stone enhancer sealer is often used on tumbled, antique stones or on slate where a darker, enriched or highlighted character is desired. Stone enhancer sealers are also a no-sheen, penetrating/impregnating sealer that is formulated to darken, enrich, and highlight the natural color and beauty of stone products. They will rejuvenate and improve the appearance of worn and weathered stone. Always test loose pieces of stone to ensure desired effect with enhancing sealers. However, they will also darken the color of grout joints. They are, generally, suitable for interior and exterior use, and rated to protect the stone for several years.

Stone products should be tested periodically per manufacturer's instructions to ensure that the sealer is working effectively. Always reference manufacturer's literature for specific information on the duration of the sealer's protection and make sure that the sealer is applied in strict accordance with the manufacturer's instructions.

### FINISHING:

A stone floor finish should be applied to a polished natural stone floor only. This type of product will help enhance the shine and provide a protective coating for "soff" or polished marbles. Verify the finish is a wax-type finish designed to add luster and enhance the beauty of sealed and polished natural stone only. A topical finish may change the appearance and performance of your stone, so always test a small area first. Application of topical sealer or wax should never



## **Natural Stone Care and Maintenance (cont.)**

be done as an attempt to add a shine to a honed, scratched or non-polished stone product. This will only create maintenance and/or slip resistance problem.

### STONE CLEANERS:

Only use cleaners specifically designed for cleaning stone. These cleaners contain no acids and are concentrated neutral pH cleaners that will not affect existing sealers or wax-type coatings. The surface of the stone should be dampened with clear water to keep the cleaning solution on the surface so it can be effective. A solution of the cleaner and water, mixed pursuant to manufacturer instructions, should be applied to the stone surface with a sponge or mop. On walls, kitchen counters, or vanity tops a spray bottle can be used to apply the cleaning solution. Allow the solution to sit for manufacturer's specified amount of time (usually 3 to 5 minutes). Massage with a sponge, synthetic mop, soft bristle brush, or through the use of a floor-scrubbing machine. Mop up dirty solution and buff dry.

Once the stone has been cleaned, you can periodically apply a Spray-Buffer wax-type floor/countertop finish to enhance the luster of polished stone. Apply the finish with a spray applicator and buff immediately with a white nylon pad. Reapply as often as needed, depending on volume of surface traffic and consistency of routine maintenance program. The product is not designed to restore the original shine, but is intended to maintain and protect the original shine.

### HEAVY-DUTY STONE CLEANING:

Use a heavy-duty non-hazardous and non-polluting stone cleaner and degreaser to effectively remove heavy dirt, grease, grime, waxes, and floor finishes. Apply the solution of the cleaner and water mixed to manufacturer instructions to the stone surface with a sponge or mop. Allow setting for manufacturer-specified amount of time. Massage with a sponge, synthetic mop, and soft bristle brush, or through the use of a floor-scrubbing machine. Mop up dirty solution and buff dry. Be sure to change out the cleaning solution every 100 square feet to avoid reintroducing dirty water during the cleaning process. Rinse thoroughly with clean water when finished. After cleaning you may apply the Spray-Buffer wax-type floor/countertop finish to enhance the natural shine.

### STAIN REMOVAL:

Stone poultices will remove stains and grout haze from stone. A poultice is a fine, non-acidic, absorptive clay cleaning powder that removes deep-set oil stains, grease, and light cementitious grout haze from polished and unpolished natural stone. **WARNING:** A poultice may dull the shine of the polished stone. If this occurs you will need to use a marble polish to restore the natural shine.

### RESTORATION:

If a marble finish has become dull, scratched or etched, you can restore the natural shine through the use of a marble polish, and even the use of floor buffing machines. The process is generally a re-crystallization process to remove fine scratches and restore the original shine and polish to the stone.