



INDOOR FLOORING

By Mary Helen Sprecher

The hardest worker in parks and rec...except for you

With the exception of parks and recreation staff, is there anything in the sector that works harder than the gym? After all, it might host everything from basketball to pickleball to volleyball to futsal—and a lot more.

Gyms located in community centers stay busy. They act as sites for before- and afterschool programs and community meetings, serve as polling places, and host rainy-day activities for camps and other programs—and that's just on the surface.

With so much going on, it's no wonder that these surfaces are the first places in a gym to show wear. What practices can staff follow to safeguard indoor surfaces and keep them in good repair?



For wood floors, Tommy Ellison of Covington Flooring says leaders must budget for regular recoating.

“Most manufacturers recommend annual recoating for good reasons,” Ellison says. “First, recoating preserves the surface. It adds a new layer of clear finish, protecting the wood from wear, scuff marks, and shallow scratches. Recoating will also help to protect the stained and painted areas. This is especially true where the floor is painted in high-traffic areas. Recoating also refreshes the gym floor’s glossy appearance. This improves the facility’s overall look

and makes it more welcoming for athletes, visitors, and spectators.”

Most importantly, he adds, “A professionally applied maintenance coat maintains safety; it restores the delicate balance of slide versus traction required for most indoor sports—especially basketball, volleyball, pickleball, and for most speed and agility drills requiring quick stops and starts on the floor.”

In between recoating jobs, regular maintenance is needed, says Jimmy Waters of Arizona Wood.



“The floors look great right when we complete them, but usually within a few years, they tend to look worn out due to lack of proper maintenance on a daily basis and due to not being stricter on proper protecting or use of the floor.”

Before creating a maintenance regimen, he adds, the manufacturer or installer should be called in order to understand the type of work and specific products required.

“Only use the recommended cleaning products for flooring; do not use just a normal pH-neutral cleaner. Always check with your flooring contractor to ensure it is the correct cleaner for the flooring you have installed.”

All floor professionals recommend weekly inspections to check for areas of wear, water damage, or anything else. If problems are noticed, contact the flooring company. No untreated issue will improve over time.

And regardless of company affiliation, geography, or any other factor, floor professionals agree on one thing: Don’t use any type of tape on flooring, even temporarily. Unfortunately, sports programs often set up shop in a gym and, lacking the correct playing lines, apply tape to delineate space.

Whether it’s painter’s tape, masking tape, electrical tape, the dreaded duct tape—or anything else—it can leave a residue that collects dust, damages the finish, or, if left down long enough, bonds to the surface, creating long-lasting problems. Flooring pros say departments can spend less by investing in professionally painted lines instead of paying repair costs for tape-related damage.

THE SURFACES AVAILABLE

While wood is an old and respected surface, it is not the only one available.

“The changing needs of indoor facilities have led to a variety of new and innovative surface materials that meet the demands of today’s users,” says Waters.



Some of the most popular surface materials for indoor facilities include the following:

- *Polyurethane:* Polyurethane is a versatile and durable material often used for multipurpose, indoor facilities. It is slip-resistant, shock-absorbing, and easy to maintain. It offers good traction as well.

- *Interlocking tiles made of polypropylene:* These tiles are designed specifically for multi-sport use, are available in a variety of colors, and are easily assembled.

- *Rubber:* Rubber is another durable and versatile material that is often used for indoor facilities, especially weight rooms and fitness areas. It is shock-absorbing and protects the concrete substrate from shattering or deteriorating over time. Rubber also offers enhanced acoustic properties for impact noise or for areas near offices or first-floor activity rooms.



- *Artificial Turf:* Artificial turf is a low-maintenance and durable option for some indoor facilities. It is also slip-resistant, provides good traction for agility and speed training, and is often used for indoor softball and baseball batting cages.

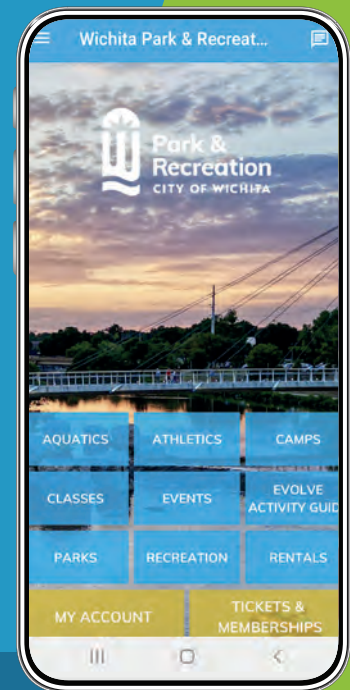
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CORRECT FOOTWEAR

One of the problems with sports floors that host a variety of activities is people rarely wear the correct shoes to keep the floors in good condition. Whereas high schools, colleges, and even grade schools can specify that only non-marking court shoes are allowed, it is much harder to enforce such rules in a recreational setting where athletes may not own multiple pairs of shoes. Consult a surfacing professional about the problem and prepare to address marks on the surface regularly.

ROLLING AND STATIC LOADS

Athletic flooring is typically exposed to loads including sports equipment, such as portable volleyball net stanchions and gymnastics equipment. Loads can also include maintenance equipment like ladders, equipment holding devices such as mat carts, and even lifts to change light fixtures or hang banners.

When considering a maintenance plan for indoor flooring, it's important to anticipate the most common type of load.

Impact loads are momentary indentations, including dropped weights, tables, chairs, or other equipment.

Static loads are those that remain in place for moderate to extended periods. These might include loads caused by equipment such as portable basketball goals, bleachers (in open and closed positions), and staging.





Rolling loads are those caused by equipment that moves across a surface, such as bleachers, carts, service vehicles, lifts, or other wheeled equipment.

All sports flooring systems have load limitations that must be considered. Consult with equipment manufacturers for load specifications, and with flooring manufacturers for compatibility. In some cases, floor manufacturers may suggest floor protection.

Waters says problems can occur with the use of maintenance equipment, especially when flooring is “not protected properly when servicing the basketball goals, lights, etc., or with man lifts, forklifts, or scissor lifts.”

More information on indoor flooring can be obtained from the American Sports Builders Association, which publishes *Courts & Recreational Facilities: Construction and Maintenance Manual*, available at www.sportsbuilders.org. **PRB**

Mary Helen Sprecher is the technical writer for the American Sports Builders Association (ASBA), and also the editor of two of ASBA’s publications, Sports Fields: Construction and Maintenance Manual and Courts & Recreational Surfaces: Construction and Maintenance Manual.

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