

# Mat-ter of Fact

## Prevent Restroom Odors at Their Source

By ANDRE STUCKI

Urine odor in restrooms is not a pleasant subject, but it is a very real issue that must be addressed by service providers who understand that restroom cleanliness is probably the most important lasting impression a facility can make with occupants.

By its very nature, the restroom has many sources of odor that can quickly become out-of-control. The first step in eliminating an odor is to find its source. Sniffing around to detect where the odor is strongest is highly effective; using a black light is a more sophisticated, yet equally effective, method.

In a dark room, odor-causing bacteria illuminates when exposed to a black light. Pay special attention to toilets, urinals and the floor around them, as they are notorious for offensive odors. After locating the




source of the odor, have the area deep cleaned with an enzyme based cleaner. Once the odor is gone, take steps to ensure that it doesn't return:

Clean soiled surfaces daily with a high-quality enzyme disinfectant, and place a disposable, antimicrobial floor mat under sinks, urinals and commodes, to catch spills and protect floors.

When cost, product effectiveness, and customer satisfaction are factors that must be considered when deciding how to maintain a clean floor and odor-free restroom, disposable urinal mats are the ideal choice. Not only do they provide an affordable, attractive, and effective solution to this taboo subject, but they can increase the life of your floor and decrease the possibility of hazardous slip and fall liabilities.

This challenging task of keeping re-

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strooms clean and odor free from urine is nothing new — restaurants, country clubs, bars, airports, hospitals and other public restrooms face this daunting task on a daily basis. Urine gets splashed from the urinal to the floor, which is not only unsanitary, unsightly, and pungent, but it is invariably stepped on and tracked around the restroom and into other public areas.

This certainly leaves a very bad impression with patrons and can ultimately cause service providers to employ a costly maintenance staff for cleaning and upkeep who need to mop at all hours of the day and night. Guests can be inconvenienced by wet floors, and the chance of someone falling is very real.

The simple solution of protecting your restroom floor with a urinal mat on a regular basis not only improves your restroom's overall appearance, but it increases your bottom line by reducing the need for costly and environmentally harsh and harmful janitorial cleaning supplies and the janitorial staff to constantly mop the floor of these wet puddles. Mopping can now be controlled to scheduled times, allowing the mat itself to absorb spills and odor.

Not all mats are created equal, though,

and a service provider should take the time to find a mat that has been approved by the ADA (American Disabilities Act). While it cannot guarantee that a slip and fall accident will not occur, it can greatly lessen the possibility.

Furthermore, many urinal mats today are coated with an anti-microbial coating that is non-toxic and environmentally safe. These anti-microbial treatments actually kill odor causing bacteria, rather than just masking the air with a temporary fragrance and keep the restroom fresher and the floor drier longer. One such coating, in particular, Ultra-Fresh of Thompson Research Laboratories of Toronto, Canada, goes through many rigorous tests and conformity standards to ensure that the coating will last through the life of the mat. Fred Martin, Technical Support at Thompson, states, "The science behind the protective coating on the mats provides an inhibitor to the growth of bacteria and fungi, which in turn absorbs the moistures that causes the unpleasant odors."

There is also another benefit to keeping your floor dry and urine free by protecting it with a mat. If you have a ceramic tile floor, the urine will get into the grout and

stain it. Because grout is a porous substance, it will absorb and retain the odor from the urine. If you have a wood or laminate floor, the urine can seep in between the planks and cause the wood to buckle and even rot. Either way, your floor could become damaged and require expensive replacement — all of which could easily be avoided by simply getting into the habit of using disposable urine mats.

Depending on the floor traffic, urinal mats can last anywhere from one week to a month and are easily disposed of by using normal waste management collection. Typically packed in cases of six or 12 each, they amount to pennies a day to maintain. Some mats on the market today even have such sophisticated technology, that they have an embedded device that will tell you when the mat needs to be replaced.

Mats come in a variety of convenient sizes, shapes, and colors and some manufacturers even offer private-labeling opportunities for very little added cost. They can reduce your maintenance hours and costs while increasing the positive image of your restroom. □

For more information on urinal mats and odor control, go to [www.hygolet.com](http://www.hygolet.com).

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