

# YOUR FLOOR & THE WRATH OF OLD MAN WINTER

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Old Man Winter has been working with Mother Nature since the beginning of time, and like Mother Nature, he has no prejudices when it comes to casting his wrath. An extreme winter wreaks havoc on daily lives and it is an archenemy to hard surface flooring which makes daily maintenance like going into battle. The fallout can be hard on your floor if you don't fight back to protect your investment. We've fielded the question, "Is there an easy solution?" many times this winter. The answer is simply, no. The only way to hold your own in this battle is with diligence and the right weapons.



In a recent message from a commercial flooring sales agent, I heard frustration and angst. His Hair salon floor- tracked-in winter ice melt residue customer, the owner of a small shop, had called him in for backup. The small business owner was losing the battle between Old Man Winter and her newly installed floor. She needed tactical advice. The sales agent's message to me included phrases such as, "They are frantic...tried everything (to keep their new floor clean)...(white residue) keeps coming back...afraid of permanent damage (to the floor). What do I (tell my customer to) do?" Luckily, photos were attached. You'll likely agree, it's a mess!

Like maintenance teams and business owners everywhere, she had seen record amounts of snow, sleet and freezing rain that hit hard in many areas of the US this winter. Maintenance teams and business owners everywhere had to wield snow blowers, shovels, rock salt, sand and ice-melt pellets in the fight to keep their doors open and their customers and employees safe. This successful combat in the streets does not stop Old Man Winter from spreading his fury indoors. Foot traffic and deliveries entering shops and offices track rock salt and ice-melt pellets along with melting bits of snow, ice and sand (used for traction outdoors) to the indoor battlefield. As effective as it is outside, the ammunition used to reduce slip and fall on sidewalks and roadways



backfires inside causing white residue, slippery spots and scratches on indoor hard surface and resilient floors. The picture above is a good example. Get ready to fight!

Knowing what goes wrong when ice melt products track indoors should help you prepare for battle. Rock salt and ice melt pellets dissolve as they work. This process creates brine (sodium chloride solution) that mixes with abrasive sand particles used for exterior slip resistance. Ironically, when tracked indoors, the same abrasive particles, that work so well outside, create small scratches in the floor's surface where dirt can get trapped, thereby reducing shine and making the floor difficult to clean. It also creates a slipping hazard due to melting ice and snow and sometimes an oily residue left behind by calcium chloride (an ingredient in some ice melt products).

In some instances, when the battle to keep the floor clean is not fought, the brine mixture will migrate into seams or joints of LVT, VCT or any modular floor. The caustic nature of the brine deteriorates the adhesive on the underside of the floor causing edges to lift or tiles to loosen.

First line of defense... sweep or vacuum. Seems simple yet not everyone does it with enough frequency during the siege of winter. Removing loose sand, dirt and salt particles is critical. During the winter months, you will find that sweeping or vacuuming may be necessary multiple times each day depending on the location of the flooring, amount of traffic and whether or not quality exterior/interior protective doormats are in place.

Once the area has been cleared (by broom or vacuum) of all loose debris, you're ready to attack with cleaner! Clean the floor with a neutral cleaner diluted in its mildest form per the container instructions. (Read full product information prior to use to ensure compatibility with your flooring type.) Cleaning the floor can be done with mop & bucket or autoscrubber. When using a mop & bucket defense, use a 2-bucket system to ensure that all the dirty solution is removed from the floor during the process. With an auto scrubber, the dirty water/solution (gray water) will be removed during the rinse cycle.



The white residue left behind by dried ice melt products can be difficult to remove and may require pre-cleaning with a brush or more than one pass with the mop & bucket or autoscrubber. Heavily textured floors, beveled edges or grout joints are obstacles that often require scrubbing with a brush before mopping. It may be necessary to mix a stronger neutral cleaner solution if the above steps are not enough to remove all the visible contamination and residue.

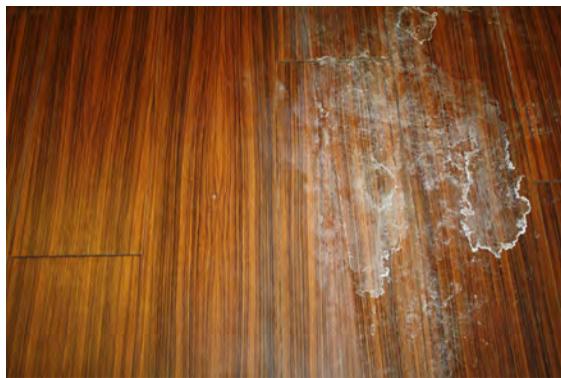


On the worst days of winter, expect to clean the floor multiple times throughout the day in heavy traffic and entry areas. Always use safety cones strategically positioned to keep pedestrians out of the war zone and safe during cleaning and until the floor is dry. If foot traffic is constant, clean the floor in small sections to permit foot traffic as needed.

Entry area doormats, both inside and out, are essential to victory! Entry Emats not only reduce the costs associated with daily care and maintenance, but they are heavy artillery that will minimize the time and liability associated with winter flooring maintenance. Quality commercial walk-off mats can absorb up to 90% of the dirt and moisture that is tracked in from the outdoors. Vacuum floor mats one or more times each day during the height of the winter. Have permanent mats cleaned routinely or use super-absorbent disposable mats with a non-skid backing that are changed as needed.



If you're not already doing so, use a durable acrylic finish to protect your floor. The polish will take the brunt of winter's force saving the floor's integrity. Finishes and polishes still require routine cleaning and can be recoated when the finish wears down or becomes dull. This will help to keep the floor beneath the finish in good condition.



As you create your specific plan of attack against Old Man Winter, keep in mind that some flooring materials, for example, laminate and wood floors, require different methods of cleaning and polishing/finishing since excess water can damage these types of floors. Always reference the flooring manufacturer's printed or online care instructions for your specific floor or call their Technical Service Team for advice before using new maintenance products.

There is no easy solution to the menace caused by winter weather but there are solutions that make floor care and maintenance manageable when approached with the right knowledge, tools and materials!

Don't panic! Call or email and I can help you find the right direction to secure accurate information, products or tools for your battle against Old Man Winter!

*Floor care and maintenance products mentioned in this, and other, post(s) are available at [1877floorguy.com](http://1877floorguy.com) or by calling 877-356-6748.*