



HEALTHMATS

WALKWAY SAFETY SOLUTIONS

SECURING STUDENT SAFETY AT HIGHER EDUCATION FACILITIES WITH COMMERCIAL MATS



INTRODUCTION

Sending a child, family member or loved one off to college for the first time can be a monumental moment for any parent or guardian. As young adults venture off on their own, the family they leave behind are left to deal with their worries and concerns. These concerns can range from getting back to their dorms after a night class, staying away from the party scene and even something as simple as making it to class on time. No matter what the worry is, safety always seems to be on the top of the list.

As a facility manager of a college, university or any higher education building, safety of students is also a main concern. Instead of the usual worries, responsibilities such as ensuring proper walking surfaces, cleaning up slippery spills and avoiding any potential hazards are main priorities. As college campuses vary across the country according to size, it may be difficult for any facility manager to keep up with the risks. A commercial mat rental program can act as a silent facility manager in areas where heavy foot traffic and security riskers are higher. Below we have outlined the potential safety risks on college campuses and how a commercial mat program can help secure student safety in your higher education facility.

IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

An accident occurring in your facility can not only be damaging to a student or employee but can also land your building in legal and financial trouble. Lawsuits for slip and fall accidents don't discriminate and can happen to a college campus whether big or small. Even if you think your building is protected, there are unthinkable obstacles that can come your way. Therefore, having proper safety protocols in



place such as commercial mats can end up saving you from the endless list of damaging effects. Even if your facility has been protected so far, accidents can still happen to you. Below are some cases of slip and fall lawsuits that show the damaging effects that your building could potentially face.

Just recently, a student from Florida A&M University decided to sue the school over a slip and fall accident.¹ The student was walking back to her dorm when a locked gate forced her to take an uneven pedestrian path. As she was walking, the uneven surface caused her to receive a fractured ankle that required surgery to repair. As a result of the surgery, the student left school and lost her credits for the spring 2016 semester. Now the Florida A&M lawsuit states the school was negligent in failing to provide or maintain a safe walking path into the property.² The lawyer says that the pedestrian gate indicated the heavy foot traffic in the area and thus should have been protected with an evenly paved path. Though this case hasn't been settled yet, if found guilty it may end up costing Florida A&M.

¹ <http://www.tallahassee.com/story/news/2017/05/03/former-student-suing-over-fall-famu/101241176/>

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IT COULD HAPPEN TO YOU

Another case of a slip and fall lawsuit on a college campus comes from a decision by The Superior Court of Pennsylvania. The Superior Court affirmed a decision in favor of a student who slipped and fell backwards while descending an exterior flight of stairs.³ After a trial, the jury returned a verdict in favor of the student in the amount of \$725,000. The court stated that all property owners, including colleges and universities, must use reasonable care in maintaining their premises.⁴ When going to court with these cases, the area where the accident occurred is fully evaluated. If proper precautions were not put in place and the school is found negligent, it could have a lot of repercussions.

SAFETY HAZARDS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES

To understand how to protect against safety concerns as far as facility maintenance goes, you first need to assess the potential hazards that may make this job tougher. As a student walks around your facility they should feel safe and secure always. This means walkways should be free of any cracks, holes, or divots that could cause someone to trip and fall. It also means taking the proper steps to immediately clean up any spills or messes that can be dragged from the outside in. Below is a list of safety hazards that can heighten the risks of accidents occurring and possibly jeopardizing student safety.⁵

³ <https://www.needlelawfirm.com/blog/2015/07/27/pennsylvania-superior-court-upholds-students-recovery-against-university-in-slip-and-fall-case/>

⁴ <https://www.needlelawfirm.com/blog/2015/07/27/pennsylvania-superior-court-upholds-students-recovery-against-university-in-slip-and-fall-case/>

⁵ <http://www.healthyworkinglives.com/advice/workplace-hazards/falls>

SAFETY HAZARDS ON COLLEGE CAMPUSES



Weather - On college campuses where each passing season brings a change in weather, the potential for accidents is heightened. As students walk into your facilities they can be dragging the contents from outside in. This further creates hazardous conditions that can cause slip and fall accidents to occur.

Uneven floor surfaces - Uneven floor surfaces are unsafe for not only students who enter your buildings, but faculty and staff as well. Students or professors who are rushing to class may not always pay attention to the floor below them. If the floor they are walking on is uneven or contains cracks or holes this could be a major accident that's just waiting to happen.

Unsuitable floor coverings - Floor coverings that are misplaced around your facility could end up doing more harm than good. If rugs are not properly secured, the lifted edges could end up tripping a student who stumbles upon it.

Wet or dirty floors - Spills that are not cleaned up right away, especially ones that are in high traffic areas, could cause an unattended slip and slide. Even dirt, dust and debris can be hazardous to your facility.

Poor housekeeping - The above risks could all be diminished if your building took the proper preventative measures to ensure good housekeeping. Poor housekeeping practices can open the doors to many accidents that can potentially harm students.

HOW MATS PREVENT SLIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS

Now that the risks of student safety have been discussed, learning how to manage these problems is the next important step. For a college or university, ensuring the safety of thousands of students can feel like an overwhelming task. That's where the use of a commercial mat program comes in. Commercial mats can act as "silent safety managers" throughout your entire facility. Mats can stand alone in important places that cannot be guarded throughout the day. In high traffic areas where a large number of students is concerned, mats are able to prevent slip and fall accidents.

Due to weather or other outside elements, students often walk into buildings with moisture, dirt and debris fixated on the bottom of their shoes. Without mats guarding the entryways, the possibility of a slip and fall accident is greatly increased. When students walk into a building and then instantly step on a commercial mat, this potential hazard can be eliminated. They are instead provided with a secure place to stand and wipe their feet before ever touching the floor surface. High quality and trusted commercial mats are equipped to trap water. They are secured to the floor with a nitrile rubber backing so they won't wrinkle, ripple or cause an uneven surface. They are designed to reach into the crevices of shoes and scrape away unwanted debris. With the proper matting placed in specific designated areas, the chances of a slip and fall accident occurring will be greatly reduced.

Aside from entryways, commercial mats can be placed in areas where other accidents can occur. This means they can be utilized in all parts of your college campus.



HOW MATS PREVENT SLIP AND FALL ACCIDENTS

They can also perform double duty by providing long lasting comfort for students who are on their feet for long periods of time. In classrooms that contain labs where students are required to stand over microscopes for an extended amount of time, anti-fatigue mats can provide long lasting comfort. Anti-fatigue mats work to reduce the amount of stress and strain put on muscles while standing. They are also grease and oil proof so any spills can be quickly cleaned up without soaking into the mat itself. These specific mats can also be autoclave sterilized and treated for a lifetime protection against odors and degradation.

For universities or colleges that allow students to live on campus, dorm rooms are a specific area that fosters lots of activity. The dorm buildings often contain communal bathrooms that can end up getting messy if not properly maintained. With showers running at all hours of the day it would be impossible to keep up with safety hazards unless it was controlled at all times. Introducing wet step mats into your bathrooms could solve this problem for you. They are created for wet areas and have built in holes that allow water to properly drain. They are slip resistant and comfortable so they can be utilized outside of showers, under sinks and any other areas where it may become slippery. No matter what area of your college needs protecting, commercial mats are able to help prevent accidents from occurring.

MAINTAIN YOUR FACILITY



The key to maintaining a safe environment on your school's campus is to practice good housekeeping techniques. Overtime your floors can wear and it's important that they remain protected. Without adequate matting in place, 1,500 people walking through your facility can remove up to 42% of a floor finish.⁶ Unprotected floors can lead to cracks or divots that can negatively

affect the look and safety of your facility. Commercial mats are durable, and reduce the damage that heavy foot traffic can cause.

Not only do commercial mats keep students safe and secure, they also keep your building cleaner. Commercial mats will help reduce the amount of dirt, dust and grime being transferred throughout your building. This can then reduce maintenance and labor costs and the amount of work you put into consistently cleaning floors. When implemented properly by a trusted mat company who is trained to practice the best safety precautions, your college or university can continue to keep students safe.

⁶ <http://kennedyflooringireland.ie/entrance-matting/debomat-primary-entrance-mat/>

CONCLUSION

Maintaining the safety of students at a college or university is the main priority of parents and facility managers alike. Students should be able to walk around campus without the fear of accidentally slipping and falling on uneven, wet or dirty surfaces. If this type of accident were to occur within one of your buildings, the damaging effects could be seen for years to come. Facility managers can help prevent these accidents from occurring by implementing a commercial mat program. Not only will commercial mats prevent slip and fall injuries by trapping moisture, dirt and debris, they will also help keep your facility clean. These mats can be used in many different areas to protect students while they are going about their everyday routine. Allow mats to be the silent safety managers in your facility so you know students are protected in places you cannot always be.

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