

The Cheesecake Factory Cleans Up Floor Safety Issues with Cintas Safe Floor Program

"I struggled with developing a complete floor program to create a safe environment for staff and guests. The restaurants using Cintas' safe floor program have experienced a 53 percent reduction in slip-and-fall accidents since its implementation."

Kurt Leisure, Vice President of Risk Management,
The Cheesecake Factory



Opportunity

Operating more than 150 full-service restaurants, The Cheesecake Factory brand is synonymous with high-quality ingredients, an innovative menu and unsurpassed customer service. Serving more than 350,000 customers each day—more than twice its leading competition—The Cheesecake Factory constantly focuses on providing its guests with an enjoyable, clean and comfortable dining experience. During peak operating times, there can be as many as 70 Cheesecake employees in the kitchen and front of the house areas who are dedicated to serving guests and enhancing their experience.

Due to the high volume of foot traffic from employees and guests, soil can accumulate throughout various areas in the restaurants. From servers walking between expo and dining areas to guests walking from the outside into dining areas, dirt, oil and liquids gather creating surfaces that could be conducive to a slip and fall accident. Unclean and unsafe floors are the cause of approximately 50 percent of slip and fall accidents in foodservice establishments. As a

result, Kurt Leisure, Vice President of Risk Management for The Cheesecake Factory, knew he needed to identify a comprehensive floor maintenance solution that captured contaminants at their source in order to improve floor safety.

Leisure's challenge was to identify an innovative strategy while maintaining The Cheesecake Factory's signature brand image which includes a variety of upscale floor substrates. Looking to eliminate slip and fall claims and improve trust in floor safety, Leisure trialed several different floor maintenance programs. Finding that a "one-size-fits-all" approach did not work in their restaurants, Leisure approached Cintas Corporation—a long-term, trusted deep cleaning service provider to The Cheesecake Factory.

Solution

To address concerns about floor cleanliness and safety, Cintas began a six-month audit and observation period to identify and understand the specific needs of each

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I've worked with a variety of vendors throughout my 25 years in the industry, but I could not find a vendor that considered the importance of our brand in the development of a safe floor program. Everyone wanted to hand us a turn-key solution. It wasn't until we reached out to Cintas that we were able to find a partner that could customize a solution to meet our unique floor care needs."

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restaurant. They then tested a series of programs to ensure the right fit.

"Cintas spent an extensive amount of time in our restaurants to understand how they operate," explained Leisure. "Once they knew the peak periods for soil buildup and potential high-risk areas, they developed a customized safe floor program that resolved these issues and improved our overall safety and cleanliness."

By performing several traction-audit tests to determine the slip resistance of the quarry tile, polished granite, limestone and ceramic tile floor surfaces, Cintas developed a comprehensive safe floor program that matched the unique surfaces used throughout all of its restaurants. Designed to trap soil at its point of origin in the front and back of the house areas, the program includes autoscrubbers, carpet mats, dual-chamber

mop bucket systems, microfiber flat mops and extensive employee training.

- **Autoscrubbers:** Due to the high volume nature of their restaurants, Cintas recommended the use of autoscrubbers every two hours in kitchen areas. Equipped with special floor cleaning chemicals and brushes to effectively agitate and loosen soils, the auto scrubbers also use high-powered extraction vacuums to remove water and soils from the surface. This allows a Cheesecake employee to effectively clean flooring in a matter of minutes with no business interruption, which is of particular importance in heavily soiled and traveled kitchen areas. The ergonomic, lightweight design of the autoscrubber machines allows any employee, regardless of cleaning expertise or stature, to perform the cleaning. Following cleanings, kitchen floors are completely free of oils, food debris and moisture, thereby improving employee safety in the kitchen and reducing the likelihood of any soils being transferred to guest areas.



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- Matting:** To keep dirt, oil and food particles from spreading throughout the restaurant, Cintas developed a comprehensive matting program for The Cheesecake Factory. Matting was strategically placed in zones throughout the restaurant, particularly around areas leading into and out of the kitchen to help contain soils and prevent them from being tracked into other restaurant zones.

All matting is rotated twice daily to avoid the inkpad effect—the transfer of captured soils from kitchen and expo mats to the dining areas. To maintain mat cleanliness and overall flooring conditions, Cintas replaces all matting several times a week to keep floors clean and dry, boosting its effectiveness in slip and fall prevention.



- Mopping systems:** To improve cleanliness and to address accidental spills, Cintas integrated new mop systems into the safe floor program. In front of the house areas, employees are equipped with microfiber pulse mops for spot cleaning and regular mopping of the

“Matting is one of the most crucial components of our overall safety initiative. It acts as the last line of defense to prevent the spread of water and debris from the kitchen to dining areas.”

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lobby, dining area, and transitional walkways. Equipped with a 16 oz. onboard reservoir that dispenses floor cleaning chemicals, this lightweight tool is unobtrusive and allows for easy storage out of sight from customer view. When mop heads become soiled, they can be easily replaced, which adds to the system’s ease of use and encourages more frequent cleaning.

In the back of the house areas, dual-chamber mop buckets are designed for daily floor cleaning tasks. Each bucket system is color-coded and designated to a specific restaurant zone for easy training and to reduce opportunities of cross contamination. For example, red buckets are designated for restrooms, yellow for kitchen areas and brown in dining areas when the restaurant is closed. The dual-chamber system separates dirty and clean water to prevent dirt from re-depositing on the floor surface. This improves floor cleanliness and further mitigates accident risk. It also reduces labor and time associated with cleaning tasks.

- Training:** Prior to the program roll out, Cintas used a “train the trainer” method to educate employees on



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the new system. Cintas first worked with regional facility managers and staff to educate them on not only how to use the system, but why it was important. They then helped cross-train personnel who would be responsible for using the autoscrubber and performing floor cleaning duties. Cross-training multiple personnel spread out the responsibilities to improve cleaning frequencies. For example, if the dishwasher was not available to run the autoscrubber through the kitchen, a different, available employee would know how to complete the task.

Training also included a specific slip-and-fall prevention program that educated The Cheesecake Factory's employees on how to properly address spills. Cintas also provided wall charts and posters that provided key details on how to perform specific duties, which provided further support after training was complete.

"The program Cintas developed is extremely effective yet easy to follow," said Anastacio Rodriguez, Executive Kitchen Manager, The Cheesecake Factory. "Everyone has been educated on how floor cleanliness impacts

floor safety, so staff members know what they are doing and are excited to participate."

Results

Through Cintas' customized safe floor program, The Cheesecake Factory has drastically mitigated risk for slips and falls, reduced costs, improved brand image and increased customer and employee satisfaction. Additionally, the program fits seamlessly into business operations and has increased productivity and morale among employees. Operators have also received positive feedback from customers regarding cleanliness and appearance.

Leisure identified the following benefits experienced through the program:

- **Increased floor safety:** Since the implementation of the program, The Cheesecake Factory has experienced a 53% reduction in slip-and-fall accidents. The comprehensive program keeps floor surfaces safe and clean throughout all hours of operation.

"I have never seen a safe floor program that works so well to protect guests, staff and image. We have virtually eliminated slips and falls and seen many other unexpected savings from the program."

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- **Lowered costs:** The Cheesecake Factory has experienced a drastic reduction in slip-and-fall claims and worker's compensation costs. Additionally, the restaurant reduced labor costs due to improved efficiencies. Spills and unsafe floor conditions would cause kitchen closures, resulting in downtime as employees addressed the issue. With Cintas' safe floor program, total floor maintenance time is reduced by approximately 65 percent, allowing employees to focus on the most important part of the restaurant operations—its guests.

In addition, the new autoscrubber has minimized chemical use by approximately 25 percent, further reducing costs.

- **Improved brand image:** The new program enables employees to proactively address spills and maintain high levels of flooring cleanliness and safety at all times. Brand image is improved as floors stay clean



"I can sleep better at night knowing I don't have to worry about accidents occurring in my restaurants. My goal is to completely eliminate slips and falls—and I truly believe that through this program, we can accomplish that."

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and perfectly complement The Cheesecake Factory's signature upscale ambiance.

- **Improved guest satisfaction:** Guests have repeatedly commented on the improved safety and appearance of flooring. Clean floor surfaces in dining areas reassure guests that back of the house areas are also kept clean, improving their overall experience. Clean floors also provide guests with confidence that they can walk safely throughout the restaurant. Additionally, guests receive greater attention and faster service because employees can move more efficiently to accommodate requests.
- **Boosted employee morale:** Employees have embraced the new floor program and are proud of the appearance and safety of the floors. Employees report feeling more confident and safe walking quickly in the kitchen, expo and dining areas. The ease of the program makes employees more willing to participate, further enhancing cleanliness levels.



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