

Division 3 — Floors, walls and ceilings

9 Application

9 The requirements for floors, walls and ceilings specified in this Division apply to the floors, walls and ceilings of all areas used for food handling, cleaning, sanitising and personal hygiene except the following areas:

- (a) dining areas;
- (b) drinking areas; and
- (c) other areas to which members of the public usually have access.

Dining areas include seating areas of restaurants, outdoor dining areas of restaurants and customer areas of takeaways.

Drinking areas include the customer side of bars and outdoor drinking areas of premises.

Other areas to which customers have access include customer areas of supermarkets and other retail shops, customer areas of warehouses and public toilets.

The requirements of other Divisions in this standard will apply to these areas.

10 Floors

The intention is that floors are appropriate for the area, able to be effectively cleaned, impervious to grease, food particles and water and do not provide harbourage for pests.

The requirement applies to floors in parts of the premises used for food handling such as kitchens, storerooms, coolrooms and to external areas where food is handled, for example, loading docks. It also applies to areas used for washing and cleaning equipment and utensils, and to toilet and other personal hygiene areas, provided there is no public access.

It does not apply to dining and drinking areas and areas where the public have access.

10(1) Floors must be designed and constructed in a way that is appropriate for the activities conducted on the food premises.

‘Appropriate’ is defined in the dictionary to mean ‘suitable or fitting for a particular purpose’ and this is the meaning intended here. In deciding whether or not the floor is appropriate, consideration should be given to food safety factors such as:

- whether the materials of which the floor is made, or the ground surface if it is being used, could produce dust or other material that could contaminate food;
- the type of materials (food scraps, oil and grease, water, chemicals) that could be spilt on the floor and need to be removed through cleaning, cleaning methods and materials available to the business; and

- whether the floor is of sufficient durability to withstand the type of cleaning operations used and degree of wear and tear occurring during food handling or other activities in the area.

The business may also consider other factors such as cost, occupational health and safety issues and appearance.

Specific requirements

10(2) Subject to subclause (3), floors must:

Subclause (2) contains specific requirements for floors. The majority of businesses would have to provide floors that meet these requirements, but note the exemptions in subclause (3).

(a) be able to be effectively cleaned;

Floors must be capable of being effectively cleaned to remove accumulations of food waste, dirt, grease or other visible matter. Such accumulations provide food for pests, enable microbial growth and could directly contaminate food. The food waste, dirt, grease or other visible matter on the floor may be from a variety of sources including food spills, food handlers' shoes and food packaging brought into the premises.

Generally, to be effectively cleaned, floors in kitchens and other areas where food is prepared or cooked should be smooth (within occupational health and safety guidelines), free from cracks and crevices, and resistant to hot water, steam and/or chemicals. It is also important in permanent premises that the floor is durable otherwise the business will be faced with replacement costs and associated disruption. Examples of floors that meet the criteria include glazed tiles with flush epoxy grouting, sheet vinyl and epoxy resin.

The same criteria would apply to floors in wash up areas.

The type of floors that are suitable for staff amenity areas, including wash rooms, will depend on the extent to which food residues are carried into these areas and the method of cleaning necessary to keep the floors clean. Glazed tiles, sheet vinyl and epoxy resin would be suitable, as would flooring for storage areas (referred to opposite).

There is no requirement that the floor be capable of being sanitised, that is, withstanding chemical sanitisers or the high temperatures of hot water or steam sanitising. Such a requirement is not considered necessary because food should not be in direct contact with the floor and walking on the floor negates the sanitiser's effect. Cleaning methods should be adequate to remove soil as well as reduce micro-organisms to a safe level. However, if a business sanitises floors, the floor must be able to withstand the effects of sanitising to be appropriate under subclause (1).

If an enforcement agency considers that the type of food operation necessitates that the floor must be capable of being sanitised to ensure very low levels of contaminants (for example, very low levels of listeria) in the environment, this could be required under clause 3 **General requirements**. Clause (3)(c) of this standard states that the design and construction of food premises must permit the premises to be effectively cleaned and, if necessary, sanitised.

Coving

There is no specific requirement for coving at the junction of the floor and wall. However, coving should be provided in new premises in areas where floors are intended to be or likely to be cleaned by flushing with water. It may also help cleaning where the floor has to be frequently swept. Installing coving at floor-wall junctions behind stoves and food preparation benches may make these difficult-to-access areas easier to keep clean.

In existing premises it should not be necessary to install coving unless there are problems with cleanliness. Installing coving on existing floors is not always successful as it is likely to create ridges or ledges that can trap dirt and it may be difficult to ensure that the coving adheres strongly to the surface beneath. If a business has difficulty keeping an existing wall-floor junction clean it is preferable to improve the cleaning rather than install coving over existing surfaces.

Storage areas

Requirements for floors in food and equipment storage areas, for example dry goods stores, do not have to be as stringent as in food preparation areas because the cleaning regime may not need to be as rigorous.

Floors in these areas should be smooth and free of cracks and crevices in order to be capable of effective cleaning but they may not need to be made of materials that will withstand frequent contact with cleaning chemicals. In addition to the floor finishes above, concrete trowelled to a smooth finish is suitable, provided dense mixes are used and it is properly cured and has a steel- or machine-float finish.

An exception to the above would be coolrooms if they are frequently entered from food preparation areas and grease from floors is walked in.

Use of carpet, mats and duckboards

Carpet and other absorbent matting are not capable of being effectively cleaned and are therefore unsuitable in any food preparation, storage or wet area.

Mats (including dust control mats) and duckboards are equipment and must comply with the requirements for equipment in clause 12 **General requirements**.

(b) be unable to absorb grease, food particles or water;

The floor surface must be impervious to grease, food particles and water to enable these substances to be removed by cleaning.

(c) be laid so that there is no ponding of water; and

Water remaining on floors could provide a water source for pests and encourage their presence in the premises. It could also be a source of microbial contamination.

This means that the floor surface should be either even and horizontal or even and graded to a floor waste (or other drainage point). There must be no dips or hollows where water can collect and, if the floor is graded, it must be sufficiently graded towards the floor waste (or other point) to allow water to drain away.

Floors flushed with water or hosed down must be graded and a floor waste (drain or gully) installed so that the water drains to a drainage system. However, if the floor is dry cleaned,

a wet vacuum cleaner is used or the floor is wet mopped and the mop removes remaining water, there is no need for a fall or a floor waste provided the floor is even.

(d) to the extent that is practicable, be unable to provide harbourage for pests.

The floor must be installed so that there are no places where pests such as cockroaches could harbour and breed. For example, tiles and vinyl sheeting must be firmly attached to the surface beneath to prevent pests harbouring under the tiles or vinyl sheeting. Floors in poor condition (that is, with cracked tiles or torn vinyl) also provide a place for pests to harbour.

The requirement is only applicable to the extent that it is practicable. It would be difficult to exclude every crack or crevice in a floor. Note that failure to maintain floors in a good condition is an offence under Standard 3.2.2, subclause 21(1).

Exemptions for floors in temporary premises and in other premises with the approval of the appropriate enforcement agency

The following exemptions provide flexibility to businesses that either use food premises infrequently, for example, a stall setting up at a market or a sporting group operating a barbecue outside at a sporting event. They also allow the use of floors that traditionally have presented no food safety problems such as dirt floors in wineries and unsealed timber floors in some older premises.

10(3) The following floors do not have to comply with subclause (2):

- (a) floors of temporary food premises, including ground surfaces, that are unlikely to pose any risk of contamination of food handled at the food premises; and**

Businesses using a temporary food premises may use the existing ground surface, such as grass, concrete, paving or dirt, provided the surface would not pose a food safety hazard. This will permit businesses to sell packaged foods and food directly from the barbecue at fetes, markets, sporting events and similar functions.

If the ground surface is unsuitable, floors that do not comply with clause 10(2) may be installed, provided their use does not pose a food safety hazard. Examples of floors that may be suitable are groundsheets and sealed timber boards.

- (b) floors of food premises that are unlikely to pose any risk of contamination of food handled at the food premises provided the food business has obtained the approval in writing of the appropriate enforcement agency for their use.**

For premises other than temporary premises the business will have to obtain a written exemption from the enforcement authority for floors that do not meet the criteria in clause 10(2). The exemption is only available if the floor does not present a food safety hazard. However, there are likely to be very few types of premises that could justify floors that do not meet the requirements of clause 10(2).