

HIGH DUSTING IN A RETAIL ENVIRONMENT

High dusting of a retail store puts the spotlight back on the merchandise and keeps bringing the consumer to the cash wrap. | **Ben Bugajewski**



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Many premier retailers are changing the appearance levels of their store ceiling areas as they remodel their stores to appeal to a select consumer group. Many are creating open ceiling areas that

contain themes, animations and large monitors as well as hanging pole lighting and numerous exposed HVAC ductwork and air diffusers. Others are keeping closed ceilings but adding lighting chandeliers or lights that have exquisite and difficult-to-clean fabric shades on their lighting fixtures. The retailers are putting these areas on a preventative maintenance high dust program, having these ceiling areas cleaned several times per year to prevent dust and soil buildup and increase the overall appearance level of their stores. These areas also require dusting and cleaning prior to repainting or relamping.

Dust is the general name for minute solid particles or diameters less than 500 micrometers and, more generally, for finely divided matter. The dust which collects in a retail store is composed of atmospheric dust combined with dust generated by the inhabitants, mostly from sloughed skin cells and fibers from clothing and coverings. Dust may also contain microscopic particles of pollen, soil from airborne con-



You dust and polish your coffee table at home before guests come to visit, right? Your retail store should be treated the same way: customers should be treated like guests in your own home.

taminants, detergent residual and microscopic insects.

If the retail store is close to a restaurant or food court, this dust can combine with soils such as flour or grease and can be a challenge to remove.

Coarsely textured dust may remain in the air for a short time, while finely textured dust can stay in the store atmosphere for longer periods and be transported over greater distances in the retail environment.

The physical behavior of dust follows laws that are not always comparable with that of solid or fluid matter. For example, the pressure on a box full of dust need not be uniform.

A variety of technology has been developed for the purpose of removing accumulated dust in the retail store. The air filter is frequently used on the inlet of

the air ducts to the dust. These can be supplemented by air purifiers, including devices that employ ionization to trap dust particles. Accumulated dust in high sections of the store and difficult-to-reach areas should be removed by trained professional cleaning technicians.

If proper high dusting is not completed on a regular basis, dust will build up, harden and become thick in corners and hard to reach areas. Dust can stain paint, and building materials and cause an unsightly film on glass and hard surfaces. It can eventually cause permanent discoloration. Accumulation of dust can also interfere with the proper operation of a building's heating and cooling system.

The majority of retailers have specifications that require removal of all dust and soil on surfaces over 8 feet high when



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they have a high dust service completed.

The cleaning crew should pay special attention to areas above the fitting rooms when they perform a high dust service in a specialty retail clothing store. Surveys show again and again that consumers will return to stores that offer a clean store image. All surfaces including walls and trim should be left in spotless condition after the high dust service.

Cleaning crews must use methods to remove the dust from the retail environment and not move it around to other areas of the store or have it soil merchan-

dise. All merchandise below and near the surfaces being high dusted needs to be covered and protected. Dusters should be used only in cases where the crew cannot safely reach the soil to remove it. Vacuums with HEPA filter exhausts should always be used to remove the majority of the dust and soil. Areas can then be wiped clean with a neutral-based cationic detergent and micro fiber cloth to remove the balance of the dust and soil. In areas where the dust has been impacted with oil-based soils, a degreaser must be used to break the soil bond. Crews should be trained to take special precautions when working on certain surfaces such as acrylic (shoe tubes), which can only be cleaned with an anti-static dust cloth and approved acrylic cleaner.

Special lifts may be needed to safely reach the higher areas of a store. The crew should make sure that the lifts can be transported and fit into the store doors. Floor surfaces should be inspected prior to the start of these services to make sure that they can support the lifting equipment. They also need to follow all OSHA guidelines when working at higher heights.

The crews should start removing dust and soil at the highest point of the ceiling and work down to lower points. All surfaces including girders, light fixtures, dif-



The fan blades in this restaurant are being cleaned with a vacuum.

fusers, ductwork, pipes, conduit, fixtures and displays should be dusted and cleaned. Special attention should be paid to areas above fitting rooms. When the service is completed, the crew should remove the cover-up plastic used to protect the merchandise and wipe down and clean all shelves and fixtures. Benefits of the high dust service include the reduction in the amount of dust in the sales area and dust-free lighting with reduced energy costs — which puts the spotlight back on the merchandise and keeps bringing the consumer back to the cash wrap area of the store.

The store teams should be equipped with necessary equipment like vacuums and special tools, such as the flexible extension wand (shown at left), to reach levels of the store under 8 feet in height, which should be dusted and cleaned on a weekly basis.

Think about it. We polish our coffee tables in our living rooms and clean our hallways of debris and always remove any visible dust. Do customers in our stores deserve any less? They should be treated the same as guests in our own homes.

PRSM



The walls of this skylight 40 feet high need to be cleaned with an extension pole and feather.



A flexible extension wand.

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