



COMMERCIAL FLOOR CARE

# VCT Floor Maintenance: What Coat Count Means for Your Facility

A plain-language guide for facility managers and property owners on floor finish coat count, strip cycles, and slip safety.

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SECTION 01

# The Basics: What Is Coat Count?

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Vinyl composition tile — VCT — is the most common commercial hard floor surface in North Bay and Sudbury offices, retail stores, schools, and medical buildings. The tile itself is fairly plain. What gives it the familiar high-gloss shine of a well-maintained commercial floor is a water-based acrylic coating called floor finish, applied in multiple thin layers over the tile.

Each layer is called a coat. The number of coats currently on your floor — the coat count — determines three things: how well the floor responds to buffing and burnishing (the process that restores shine), how long the floor can go between major maintenance cycles, and whether the floor is meeting slip-safety requirements in wet areas.

Most facility managers are aware that VCT needs to be waxed periodically. Far fewer track exactly how many coats are currently on the floor, or know that there is both a minimum and a maximum — and that exceeding the maximum is just as damaging as falling below the minimum.

3-7

Optimal coats for most commercial VCT

10

Strip trigger for medium-traffic floors

## SECTION 02

# When You Don't Have Enough Coats

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With fewer than 3 coats of finish on the floor, three problems appear quickly.

## The Floor Won't Shine After Burnishing

Burnishing — the high-speed polishing process that keeps commercial floors looking sharp — works by generating gentle heat that melts and reflows the acrylic surface into a high-gloss sheen. For that to work, there needs to be enough finish material to reflow. With 1–2 coats, the burnishing machine abrades the thin film instead of polishing it. The floor looks dull or scuffed even after the crew has just run the machine over it. That's not a machine problem or a technique problem — it's a coat count problem.

## The Floor Wears Through Fast

Foot traffic, cart wheels, and rolling loads physically abrade the finish layer over time. With only 2 coats — roughly 2.5 mils of total film — a medium-traffic corridor will wear through to bare tile within 2–3 months. When that happens, the tile itself starts taking the damage: permanent scuffs, black heel marks that won't come out, and surface etching that requires tile replacement in severe cases.

## Spot Repairs Don't Work

Properly maintained floors avoid costly full strip cycles by doing spot repairs — scrubbing worn areas and applying a couple of fresh coats. This only works if there's enough finish left to bond to. At 1–2 coats, there's not. The result: what should be a quick maintenance visit turns into a full strip-and-recoat job.

## SECTION 03

# When You Have Too Many Coats

Overbuild is the more common problem in established commercial buildings. It develops slowly — two coats added at every maintenance visit, no strip cycle scheduled, year after year. By the time the problem is obvious, the consequences are significant.

## The Floor Yellows and Won't Buff Out

Thick finish buildup causes the acrylic polymer to oxidize and yellow. This shows as a persistent amber or brown tint that makes the floor look dirty even when it's clean. Burnishing doesn't fix it because the yellowing is inside the finish, not on the surface. The only solution is stripping back to bare tile.

## The Top Layers Start Peeling

Once the buildup passes 8–10 coats, the upper layers stop bonding chemically to the ones beneath — they're just sitting on top, held by friction. A heavy cart, a wheeled office chair, or even a forceful cleaning machine can peel those upper coats away in sheets. The exposed lower finish is rough, uneven, and picks up dirt — creating an appearance problem and potentially a slip hazard overnight.

## Stripping Becomes a Major Job

A normal strip-and-refinish on a well-maintained floor with 4–6 coats takes a standard janitorial shift. The same job on a floor with 12–14 coats can take two to three times as long, require multiple applications of stronger chemical, and create real risk of loosening the tile adhesive underneath. The cost difference is not proportional — it is typically three to four times the standard rate.

### The Most Expensive Floor Decision

The most costly VCT floor scenario is always a severely overbuilt floor that has also never been documented. Without maintenance records, there's no way to know how many coats are present without testing — and the strip process on an unknown buildup always takes longer and costs more. Tracking

## SECTION 04

# The Slip Risk Connection

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The relationship between floor finish and slip risk is not intuitive. Many facility managers assume that a shinier, more finished floor is a safer floor. The opposite is true in wet conditions.

Floor safety is measured by coefficient of friction (COF). A COF above 0.50 on wet surfaces is the standard requirement in Ontario and under OSHA guidelines. Bare VCT tile has a wet COF around 0.55 — it passes the threshold. A floor with 2–3 coats of finish drops to 0.45–0.47 wet COF. A floor with 5–6 coats drops to 0.40–0.42. Every coat added increases gloss and reduces wet grip.

This means that any floor with more than 1–2 coats of finish will fail the wet COF threshold in moisture-exposed areas — entrances, washrooms, corridors near sinks — unless an anti-slip treatment is applied. This is not a new requirement. It has been part of responsible floor maintenance practice for decades. But many commercial facilities have never tested their wet zone COF.

## Slip Incidents and Coat Count Records

If a slip-and-fall incident occurs on your floor, the first thing an insurance investigator or plaintiff's attorney will request is your floor maintenance records. Records showing coat count, recoat dates, and COF test results demonstrate that the facility was managing the floor responsibly. The absence of records — or records showing the floor was significantly overbuilt — creates serious legal exposure.

This is not hypothetical. Slip-and-fall litigation in commercial facilities regularly involves floor maintenance records as central evidence. The cost of a floor maintenance log is zero. The cost of a serious fall claim without one is not.

## SECTION 05

# What a Good Program Looks Like

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A good VCT maintenance program is predictable, documented, and calibrated to your specific traffic levels and floor zones. Here's what it includes.

## Starting Point: Correct Coat Count

- Low-traffic floors (private offices, storage corridors): 3–5 coats
- Medium-traffic floors (open offices, retail, public corridors): 5–6 coats
- High-traffic floors (lobbies, cafeterias, school hallways): 6–7 coats
- Anti-slip treatment in all wet zones regardless of coat count

## Annual Maintenance Cycle

- Daily mopping with neutral pH cleaner (not alkaline — alkaline strips finish slowly)
- Bi-weekly burnishing for medium-traffic floors; weekly for high-traffic
- Two full recoat passes per year (spring and fall) for medium-traffic floors
- One strip-and-refinish per year for medium-to-high-traffic floors
- Quarterly COF spot-check in all wet zones
- Every application logged: date, product, coats, operator, zone

## Northern Ontario Specifics

- Entrance zones get quarterly recoat through the October–March salt season
- No finish application when indoor RH is below 35% without humidification
- Wet floor signage at entries during any freeze-thaw weather event
- Restrict strip-and-refinish cycles to May–September if possible

## SECTION 06

# How Binx Manages This For You

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Binx Professional Cleaning manages VCT floor maintenance for commercial facilities across North Bay and Sudbury. Our floor programs are designed around the principles in this guide: coat count tracking, scheduled strip cycles, zone-specific coat count targets, and anti-slip treatment in all wet areas.

## What You Get With a Binx Floor Program

- Coat count audit at program start — we test existing coat count before adding any finish
- Zone-based coat count targets documented in your facility's service plan
- Quality Audit inspection records after every maintenance visit
- COF spot-checks in wet zones, logged and available on request
- Scheduled strip-and-refinish cycles planned before the strip trigger is reached
- Northern Ontario seasonal adjustments built into the program calendar
- WSIB coverage and \$5 million liability insurance on all floor work

We serve commercial facilities from offices and medical clinics to retail environments and government buildings. For a no-charge floor program assessment and coat count audit, call us.

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ABOUT BINX

# Why Clients Trust Binx Professional Cleaning

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\$5M	WSIB	Quality	100%
Liability Insurance	Full Coverage	Audit Verified	Green Certified

Binx Professional Cleaning is a locally owned and operated cleaning company serving North Bay, Sudbury, and surrounding communities in Northern Ontario. With 70+ trained cleaning professionals, we deliver consistent, verified, and insured cleaning services to over 200 commercial and residential clients every week.

We are proud partners of Cleaning for a Reason, providing free cleaning services to cancer patients in our community. We use 100% green-certified Green Cleaning Chemical products across every account. Every cleaning visit is verified through our Quality Audit inspection platform – so you never have to wonder whether the work was done.



## Ready to Get Your VCT Program Right?

Binx Professional Cleaning manages VCT maintenance for commercial facilities across North Bay and Sudbury. We track coat count, schedule strip cycles, and document COF compliance. Call (705) 476-2649 or (249) 239-1225.

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