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## MANAGEMENT

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# True Grit

## Prevent Slips and Falls on Stairs with Lasting, Anti-Slip Coatings

BY DEL WILLIAMS

Commercial property managers are responsible for keeping tenants happy and safe, which includes performing proactive maintenance to prevent potential slip and fall injuries in high traffic areas, stairwells, and loading docks.

Failing to do so can lead to litigation, higher tenant turnover and lower lease rates.

Unfortunately, anti-slip coatings that increase traction on slick or slippery surfaces are a veritable grab bag of options. Some are designed to be applied to only specific substrates. Others require extensive surface prep to remove existing coatings and sealants. Many shrink after drying, do not adhere well, or quickly lose embedded aggregate required to improve traction.

This can leave commercial property management firms and the painting contractors they employ unclear on the best



anti-slip coatings to apply. Ideally, the formulation could be applied to a wide range of substrates, resist shrinking and retain aggregate to improve traction and endure many years of wear. Given the large square footage and number of stairs involved in many projects at commercial properties, the time to complete any prep work and apply the coating should be minimized to keep costs down.

When property management company JLL contacted Roger Williams, owner of Youngsville, NC-based Williams Painting Service, for work at the North Carolina Mutual Life Insurance Company Building in downtown Durham, it recommended a specific true epoxy binder with embedded aggregate its building engineer had discovered at a trade show.

The coating needed to improve traction while maintaining the aesthetics of the main entry staircase, which was made of

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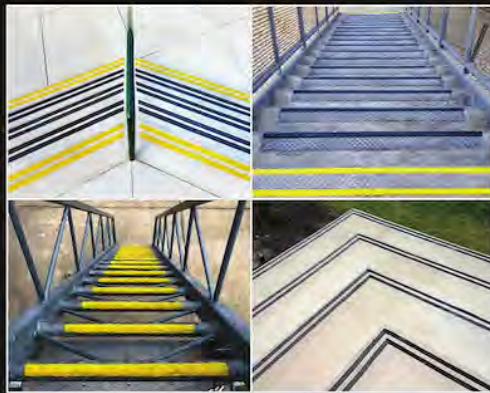
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Chattahoochee stone. The building's loading dock and a diamond plate lift surface also required better traction for safety.

They chose a non-skid coating from Form-A-Tread SL (Self Leveling), a combination of a low-to-medium viscosity epoxy binder consisting of 100 percent solids and a specialized aggregate broadcast on top. The coating can be used in a variety of surfaces including concrete, asphalt, metal, wood, and other porous and non-porous substrates.

The formulation along with the applied aggregate is designed for indoor and outdoor use and can last for years even when exposed to sunlight, chemicals, weather, and temperature extremes.

The patented coating provides a durable, slip-resistant surface on commercial flooring, walkways, ramps, and other large areas with high pedestrian or vehicle traffic. The coating is easy to mix and apply by hand. Installation is fast and the surface is typically ready for use within hours.

"The SL coating is extremely non-slip. The heavy embedded aggregate sinks into the epoxy and doesn't just sit on the top of the coating, so it is a very effective product. The finished result looks great, and the building engineer was very pleased with how it turned out," said Williams.

This epoxy paste formulation, called Form-A-Tread Original, is specifically designed to apply as stair tread striping on a variety of step surfaces. Like the self-leveling product, aggregate can be embedded in varying amounts to increase traction. The bond is so strong that a chisel or angle grinder is required to remove the stair tread line, an advantage in high traffic areas.

"Form-A-Tread is the only product we found that adheres to sealed concrete steps without coming off," said Williams.

For added safety, the 100 percent epoxy tread line does not shrink after drying and so provides a superior tactile sensation that creates greater awareness of footing when climbing or descending stairs.

According to Williams, the stair tread striping can be easily applied by untrained personnel. Each kit supplied by Form-A-

Tread includes a 400 ml cartridge of material that can produce 25 to 40 linear feet of one-inch-wide tread. A special tool is used to dispense and mix the material at the time of application in the correct ratio, eliminating the risk of human error.

For Kane Realty Corporation, a Raleigh-based real estate development company that has managed more than six million square feet of mix-used space since 1978, Williams was tasked with improving the safety of four exterior parking deck stairwells at one of its signature properties.

The stairwells run seven stories, with approximately 130 treads per stairwell.

Because one of the stairwells is near an outdoor workout area, CrossFit enthusiasts regularly run up and down the concrete steps.

The Form-A-Tread kit includes a patent-pending stencil system, so the one-inch-wide tread lines remain clean, neat, and parallel. In addition to straight line treads, instructions such as "Exit Here" or a corporate logo can be applied using the material and a stencil.

According to Williams, a crew of six was able to complete the coating application on every step of four stairwells within four days.

"Three of my crew laid the form, one did the application, one spread the aggregate, and one removed the tape strip. Once we got into the swing of things, we were able to finish a seven-story stairwell each day," said Williams.

Now, stair safety is no longer a pressing concern for Kane Realty's chief building engineer or the cross-training tenants.

After having used the Form-A-Tread all-epoxy coatings for two projects, Williams is already receiving positive input from other commercial property managers in the greater Durham metropolis.

"There are many large buildings in the downtown area where I expect to use the product in the future. I consider it extremely useful wherever safety needs to be improved with superior traction, along with upgraded aesthetics," concluded Williams. **BSM**

**Del Williams** is a technical writer based in Torrance, Calif. For more information, go to [form-a-tread.com](http://form-a-tread.com).

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