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Home > Patient Care > Senior Living Stair Safety: More Effectively Preventing Slips and Falls on High Traffic...

Patient Care

## Senior Living Stair Safety: More Effectively Preventing Slips and Falls on High Traffic Stairs

By **The Senior Outlook Today Team** - October 25, 2022

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*New, high-tech epoxy formulation offers longer lasting traction, visual warnings at tread edges, and a tactile element to prevent slip and falls more effectively in high traffic areas*

In senior living communities across the country, stairs are ubiquitous even when elevators and ramps are available. However, stairs present a slip and fall hazard, particularly when wet or slippery, an issue which is only heightened for those who are vision and mobility challenged.

To address this concern, the most common technique for preventing slip and fall accidents on stairs is the application of non-skid adhesive tapes or epoxy coatings embedded with aggregate. The appeal of this approach is that untrained personnel can quickly and easily apply the protection. Nonetheless, on high traffic stairways, tapes can peel off (creating a trip hazard) and coatings abrade away quickly, leading to frequent reapplication every few months to maintain safety standards.

Now, a new category of durable high-tech epoxy is available as a solution to effectively ensure superior stair tread footing, safety, and visibility for years without reapplication. This option dramatically reduces the need for maintenance and replacement even in heavily traveled areas and can be quickly and easily applied on stair treads by maintenance personnel.

### The Slip and Fall Epidemic

The slip and fall hazard – both in terms of physical injury and potential liability – only increases when the stairs are damaged, wet, slippery, or the area is not well illuminated.

“I am always on the lookout for slip, fall, and tripping hazards and want to improve stair safety,” says Tom Wilson, Maintenance Supervisor at Cathedral Village, a senior living community in Philadelphia, PA that provides independent residential living, short-term rehab, personal care and skilled nursing.

According to Wilson, he oversees maintenance at Cathedral Village’s 16 buildings on a 38-acre campus, which includes a skilled nursing center, personal care center, and 14 buildings of independent living apartments for seniors.

Today, enhancing the traction, feel, and visibility of stair treads is the most effective means of



reducing slip and fall incidents and injuries when it is necessary to improve building safety at senior living communities like Cathedral Village.

## A Long-Term Safety Solution

Although enhancing the traction of stair treads to improve safety is not a new concept, traditional methods like applying non-skid tape can be short-lived and difficult to maintain.

“Normal non-skid tapes do not last. When the tape product we bought got wet, its glue softened, and it came off. I wanted something more durable and long-lasting that would be a more permanent non-slip fixture on stairs. It also had to be aesthetically pleasing to the eye,” says Wilson.

Wilson sought to improve the safety of a very smooth, black marble staircase at the senior living community. “I wanted to proactively address a potential slip issue with stair edging,” he says.

Fortunately, Wilson discovered a more durable epoxy paste consisting of 100% solids that, once applied, can last for years in high traffic areas. The patented product from Form-A-Tread Company provides an extremely strong bond to a range of stair tread surfaces, with embedded aggregate to increase traction.

The epoxy paste can be used indoors or outdoors as well as exposed to chemicals, weather, and temperature extremes. 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.

Wilson had a new member of his maintenance crew apply the Form-A-Tread epoxy paste to the edge of each step of the black marble staircase to improve safety and minimize potential slipping. To delineate the edge of each stair tread, safety yellow epoxy paste was applied on the first and last step, and black on each step in between.

“After applying [the epoxy paste] last year, it is holding up very well and still looks exactly like the day he put it down,” says Wilson.

The high strength epoxy paste is designed to be easy to apply to stair treads by even untrained personnel. In a kit supplied by Form-A-Tread, there is a 400 ml cartridge of material that can produce 25 to 40 linear feet of one-inch-wide tread. A special tool is then used to dispense and mix the material at the time of application in the correct ratio – eliminating the risk of human error.

The 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.

“The kits are very easy to use. If you use the kit and watch the online video it is self-explanatory. My new maintenance staffer also told me that it dried quickly, so it was easy for him to continue working around it,” says Wilson.

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

“The tactile feel of the tread line on each stair step helps with footing,” says Wilson.

To increase safety in potential indoor blackout situations, a patented IBC 2015 compliant (ASTM E 2072), glow-in-the dark formula is available for increased visibility on the leading edges of stair nosings and landings in high rise buildings.

According to Wilson, the epoxy product not only improved safety and eliminated the need for frequent re-application, but also had a more aesthetic look over time due to the lack of

visible wear.

With the success of the project, Wilson is now considering using the epoxy product on additional staircases in Cathedral Village. This includes an area that previously was outdoors but is currently under construction to enclose it.

“After the area is done with construction, I’m planning to add [the epoxy product] to the stair treads to improve safety. When people walk in with their shoes wet from rain or snow, the stair treads will provide better footing and improve safety,” he concludes.

Maintenance supervisors like Wilson have long sought to improve the safety at senior living communities. However, the traditional methods of adding traction and visibility to stair treads can be excessively high maintenance. With advanced durable all-solid epoxy pastes that adhere to stair treads for many years, managers now have an easy-to-use tool that can improve safety for the long-term.

For more information: Call 610-994-2138; Email [info@rgfmaterials.com](mailto:info@rgfmaterials.com); Visit <https://form-a-tread.com>.

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