Floor machines come in many styles and power levels from the standard electric stick model to battery and propane-powered walk-betinds and ride-ons. They use different pad types and abrasive factors to clean, wax, buff, and strip hard surface floors. Because floor maintenance involves using powered machinery and concentrated chemicals, it is important to keep safety in mind.

Get training and read the manufacturer’s instructions for your floor machine. Read the material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all floor maintenance chemicals and get training on the use and proper mix ratios. Because these chemicals are sold in concentrated forms, use caution when pouring and mixing; they pose a hazard to skin, eyes and the respiratory system if they are not used correctly.

Wear the proper safety equipment such as comfortable, slip-resistant shoes or boots and long pants. Always wear gloves and splash goggles when mixing and dispensing chemicals. Safety glasses should be worn to protect your eyes from debris that may be kicked up by the rotating pads and brushes.

Conduct floor maintenance when there are few people around; early mornings, late evenings and weekends are good times. Use caution signs to warn others of the slippery floor. Gather the equipment and materials that you will need to prevent unnecessary trips over slippery surfaces.

Check your floor machine before you begin work. Cords for electric stick models should not have cuts or exposed wires. Apply the cleaning pad or brush while the machine is unplugged and tilted back. For battery and propane models, ensure that you have a good charge or full tank; apply pads while the machine is off. Before use, test the floor machine to make sure that parts are locked in place, it operates properly, and that the auto-stop safety feature is working.

Keep a good grip on the handles to maintain control of the floor machine. Remain aware of your surroundings to avoid hitting people, glass windows, and doors or falling down stairs or inclines and off raised surfaces. For electric models, hold the cord over the handle to avoid damaging it or getting it tangled in the pads; don’t wrap the cord around the handle because that can disable the auto-off safety feature.

To avoid trip hazards, store floor machines out of the way. Electric floor machines should be unplugged and the cord loosely wrapped. Machines that are not in good working order should be turned off, unplugged, and tagged as out-of-service for repair.

Polish your safety skills when using floor machines.