

● **Green Label-certified vacuum cleaners:** The Carpet and Rug Institute's Green Label certification is given to vacuums that are environmentally preferable.

"This program verifies that the vacuum cleaner not only is effective at removing soil and improving the carpet's appearance, but that it traps and retains dust

so that it isn't released into the air to harm indoor-air quality," Albert explained.

● **Low-moisture carpet extractors:** Such products use less water, which helps carpets dry faster (in two to six hours) and makes it less likely that mold or mildew will develop.

● **Cylindrical-brush floor machines:** Cylindrical machines reduce the amount

of powerful chemicals required compared to traditional rotary machines.

● **Simple maintenance:** Wet-mop, dust and vacuum regularly to preserve the finish and avoid too-frequent stripping.

● **Walk-off matting systems:** Matting systems stop dirt and soil at the door, before they have a chance to be tracked into the store. ■

# Surface Beauty

Vandal-resistant fixtures provide defense against restroom damage

**R**estroom facilities take a lot of abuse, and oftentimes it's intentional. From graffiti on toilet partitions to jammed faucets to missing or broken soap and toilet-tissue dispensers, vandalism in restrooms is a common problem throughout retail. It's also costly. Restroom-maintenance costs can increase dramatically when accessories and fixtures need constant replacing.

"In busy restrooms, facility managers have to change accessories as often as every two or three years," said Jason Renner, senior product manager, Bradley Corp., Menomonee Falls, Wis., which manufactures plumbing fixtures and washroom accessories. "Those costs can add up."

Equally important, restroom vandalism can give shoppers a bad impression of the entire store. A restroom with broken or malfunctioning equipment appears sloppy and ill-kept.

"It's really important that restrooms look clean," said David Hubbard, senior project architect, Scott&Goble Architects, Tulsa, Okla.

There is no such thing as a totally indestructible restroom. But retailers can increase the life cycle of their washroom facilities by specifying fixtures and accessories that are designed to resist vandalism and withstand constant use. Such products, which are extremely durable, often cost more up front. However, they can save retailers headaches and money



Easy-to-clean, hard-to-mar surfaces and touch-free systems help reduce restroom-maintenance problems.

(in both replacement and maintenance expenses) in the long run.

**Partitions:** Toilet partitions are among the primary targets for restroom vandals for a variety of reasons, not the least of which is that the vandal is hidden behind doors.

"Partitions take a real beating," Hubbard added. "People try to tear them down and carve or write on them—some even try to burn them with a cigarette lighter."

Partitions come in a variety of materials. Bradley's Renner said that some retailers with extremely busy restrooms are investing in stainless-steel partitions. The surface does not easily scuff or show

marks and a textured stainless finish is difficult to scratch.

"It's also easy to clean," Renner said.

Partitions made of solid phenolic are an attractive and durable choice for moderate-traffic restrooms, according to Renner. Phenolic is made of compressed cellulose fibers fused with a surface laminate. It is non-absorbent and resists impact and graffiti.

**Hand washing:** Hand-washing stations are also vulnerable to vandalism. Replacing broken, chipped or stained china lavatories can be expensive. A better solution, Renner said, is a solid-surface lavatory system.

"Commercial solid-surface materials

resist stains, burns, chemicals and impact," he said. "And if the surface should get damaged in some way, it can be easily repaired with everyday cleaners or fine-grit abrasives."

In addition, cleaning and maintenance are simplified with solid-surface lavatory systems since the bowl and spray heads are typically designed as continuing surfaces with smooth flowing lines, rounded edges, and no crevices for dirt build-up. The soap dispensers are also built in, which reduces the chance for slip-and-falls since excess soap drips into the bowl and not onto the counter and floor.

"These fixtures are available in a number of different colors and configurations, with one-to-three user stations," Renner said. "Some units have the look and feel of individual lavatories. Others have multiple-height options that comply with ADA requirements and can be used in family restrooms."

Soap and paper-towel dispensers and other accessories are available in a range of materials and quality grades. Vandal-resistant features, such as tumbler locks and full-length piano hinges, provide added security. Experts recommend heavy-duty stainless-steel accessories for especially troublesome restrooms—recessing them into the wall makes them even more difficult to damage.

Empty dispensers are a source of much frustration for restroom patrons. Selecting units with a higher capacity cuts down on restocking time and also reduces the potential for customer dissatisfaction. Jumbo dispensers, for example, hold two large 9-in. diameter rolls of tissue compared to the standard 5-in. rolls.

**Touch-free:** A big trend in restrooms is the shift to touch-free fixtures and accessories, which avoid the chance of people touching potentially dirty surfaces such as toilet-flush handles. Installing infrared-controlled faucets, soap dispensers and other accessories also helps keep vandalism at bay.

"If users don't need to touch a fixture, they are less likely to get frustrated and want to break it or knock it off the wall," Renner explained. ■

# Flexible Fixturing

Multipurpose designs offer storage, merchandising options

Types of Fixtures Used							
	All stores 2005	Drug store 2005	Supermarket 2005	Department store 2005	Home center 2005	Specialty apparel 2005	Big-box store 2005
Use these types of fixtures:							
Metal	96.7%	100.0%	92.3%	100.0%	100.0%	96.0%	94.7%
Wood...	93.5	100.0	92.3	94.1	83.3	96.0	94.7
...wood laminate	28.5	55.6	11.5	17.6	16.7	44.0	26.3
...solid wood	6.5	5.6	3.8	5.9	11.1	4.0	10.5
...both	52.0	38.9	61.5	70.6	55.6	44.0	42.1
...not reporting	6.5	0.0	15.4	0.0	0.0	4.0	15.8
Glass	66.7	66.7	73.1	100.0	22.2	80.0	52.6
Plastic	68.3	83.3	73.1	88.2	44.4	60.0	63.2
Combination of materials	87.8	83.3	84.6	94.1	83.3	92.0	89.5
Other material	12.2	5.6	23.1	23.5	0.0	16.0	0.0
Use fixtures that are:							
Off-the-rack	11.4	5.6	3.8	5.9	44.4	0.0	15.8
Custom made	17.1	0.0	3.8	29.4	5.6	40.0	21.1
Combination of both	69.9	94.4	88.5	64.7	50.0	60.0	57.9
Not reporting	1.6	0.0	3.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	5.3

Note: Totals of more than 100% are due to multiple responses.

Source: Chain Store Age/Leo J. Shapiro & Associates

**T**wo ongoing trends—flexibility and duality—were well-represented in the National Association of Store Fixture Manufacturers (NASFM) 2005 Retail Design Awards. Here is a look at three of the award-winning fixture applications:

**Lindt:** Dual or multi-purpose fixtures and flexible systems are as hot as ever as retailers seek to maximize available square footage. The trend is evident in the new Lindt Master Chocolatier prototype,



in Burlington, Mass., where a series of continuous aluminum rails positioned at a 10-ft. height creates merchandising flexibility by providing for a variety of fixture options.

Anchored by a base cabinet that allows for more stocking options with cupboards and drawers, the rail system incorporates both marketing and display components. It supports shelves, ladder displays and graphics, tying the elements together in an orderly fashion while providing the retailer with maximum flexibility.

**Design:** JGA, Southfield, Mich.  
**Fixtures:** Look, New York City

**Laura:** Canadian specialty apparel retailer Laura Canada also places a priority on fixture flexibility. Its new Laura prototype, in Etobicoke, Ontario, utilizes nesting tables that enable handbags, jewelry and other accessories to be displayed with folding goods. The display works to stimulate add-on sales.

The low profile of the tables creates visual interest among a sea of much taller merchandisers. Featuring a wood veneer and geometrically shaped, offset metal legs, the fixture has a contemporary look