



Facility Safety

5 Best Practices for Floor Safety in Manufacturing, from Brady

Matt Morgan | Aug 01, 2024

The floor is the hub of the manufacturing business. Bustling with activity, it’s where the work gets done—and unfortunately, it’s also where the accidents are most likely to happen. Companies have a responsibility to provide a safe environment for employees, and that includes the facility floor.

Here are five best practices for site floor safety from *Brady*, a manufacturer of products for spill control and containment and floor markings.

Develop a floor safety mindset

“Many smaller manufacturers simply don’t use floor safety products, which could be a result of decisions being made by people too far removed from the floor,” says Ric Maggard, global product manager for safety and facility identification materials for *Brady*.

“Sometimes, floor marking and identification is one of the last things they think about,” he says. “Not having floor signs marking forklift traffic at an intersection or not using the OSHA-recommended colors for marking out walkways are commonly missed.”

“Using color as an asset inside your facility really boosts that heuristic response from employees—oh, that’s where I’m supposed to be walking or that’s a line I’m not supposed to cross.”

Ric Maggard
Brady

To help manufacturers boost their site floor safety, Maggard tries to understand what’s happening deep into the organization. “It’s important to find out what is driving the safety mindset, right down to the individuals who are using the equipment and working in the area full time,” he says. “It’s important for leadership to have that safety mindset, but it gets executed at the individual level.”

Identify and plan for potential floor safety hazards

Manufacturers should make sure they fully understand all of their potential hazards, then take steps to prevent incidents and know what to do in case something happens.

"In some way, shape or form, 99.9 percent of manufacturers are going to need spill control," says Mike Ellis, national sorbent specialist for *Brady's SPC line*. "And they need to be cognizant of planning. They need to assume that at some point there will be a spill on a scale that may constitute an emergency, and they need to plan for it."

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To help with *spill control and containment*, Ellis and his team routinely perform site visits, walking the facility with a safety professional to gain a holistic view of the environment. "We're looking to identify opportunities where they can be safer," he says. "Often, people become reactionary to spill control instead of planning out for that potential hazard happening."

For floor marking and identification, Maggard's team also does facility walk-throughs to help manufacturers. "We have *literature on our website* that helps with *5S* and area marking in general—how to apply it properly so that it stays down when you need it, how to prep the floor, and color recommendations based on the area you're working on," he says.

Companies that can't employ a dedicated safety manager may consider contracting a licensed professional engineer, Ellis says. "If they're serious about increasing the level of safety," he says, "the best thing they can do is work with someone to come in and help them lay out a plan."

Be consistent with color coding

"Colors are quickly recognizable, which is a key characteristic when employee safety is concerned," Maggard says. "*Using color as an asset* inside your facility really boosts that heuristic [problem-solving] response from employees—oh, that's where I'm supposed to be walking or that's a line I'm not supposed to cross."

Though the Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires that permanent aisles and passageways be clearly marked, it doesn't specify colors. "The main takeaway is to be consistent across the facility," Maggard says. "If you're marking walkways, mark them all with the same color."

Floor marking tape comes in a variety of colors, giving manufacturers flexibility in what they can use. These recommendations from *Brady's floor marking color guide* can help:

Color is important for spill control and containment, too. Consistent use of colors lets employees know which absorbent to use for a particular spill and also lets others know what kind of spill it is.

"Sometimes you'll see chemical or hazmat pads in yellow or pink or red," Ellis says. "A distinct color alerts employees of either a toxic substance or a spill that is going to require different PPE or different procedures."

Pick the right floor safety products

One key mistake that Maggard sees manufacturers making is not picking the right product for the application.

A facility will need different floor marking products, for example, if it has high forklift traffic, foot traffic, a cold environment, textured floors or chemical washdowns.

Because Brady has its own research and development group, the company is able to bring new products to market based on demand. Take ToughStripe® Cold, which debuted in 2022. Building on the company's tried-and-true original ToughStripe® Floor Marking Tape, ToughStripe® Cold features new high-performance adhesives for refrigeration and freezer applications down to zero degrees.

When it comes to spills, Brady manufactures absorbents in three weights to suit a variety of applications—a lightweight pad for smaller spills, a heavyweight product for larger spills, and a medium weight pad for everything in between.

A durable *polypropylene sock* can be used to contain consistent equipment leaks. "I recommend those to keep an added layer of safety," Ellis says, "to keep spills from getting out from under the machines and into walkways and work surfaces."

Invest in quality products

A cheap, low-quality absorbent or floor marking solution might seem like the wise choice initially, but a manufacturing company may very well pay for it in the long term, when more of the product must be used or it fails and creates a safety risk.

Ellis shares an example: "What I see in the metalworking industry sometimes is pads get left on the floor a little too long, and they become overly saturated," he explains. "If you use a cheap product, it's very absorbent, but it's not meant to stay on the ground for very long. It'll start to come up in pieces."

Brady's *MRO line*, by contrast, is versatile and durable in addition to having an excellent absorbency point. "You start to add layers or plies, and when you go to pick those up to dispose of them, they'll stay in one piece," Ellis says. "It will be very easy cleanup."

For floor marking, painted lines help a company comply with floor marking standards, but it has drawbacks. "It tends to stick well to a lot of surfaces, but it can come off, and when it does, it never really comes off all the way, so it doesn't look great," Maggard says. Despite the perceived permanency of paint, it must be reapplied frequently, adding to a manufacturer's expenses.

Duct tape and masking tape fall short for floor marking, too. They simply aren't designed to stay put under the demands of a manufacturing facility—they tear easily and can get caught up in forklift wheels.

The original *ToughStripe® Floor Tape* is engineered with an industrial-strength polyester material and a low-profile design to minimize tears and scratches from skids and pallet jacks. ToughStripe® Max is designed for the most difficult applications with heavy foot and light industrial vehicle traffic, including forklifts and jacks.

Maggard concludes, "Brady's niche is 'when performance matters most.' We develop our products uniquely for the high-performance arena."

For additional Floor Safety Solutions, check out MSC's Safety Guide Book.