



Workplace Safety

10 Ways Having the Wrong Industrial Supplies Can Waste Money

Gillian Scott | Oct 04, 2018

What You Need to Know

The webinar was designed to spot areas where a manufacturing facility's choice of supplies could be costing money or putting workers at risk.

It's important to know all the products used in your process and how they interact with each other.

Using portable or point-of-use supplies can save money by reducing the time workers spend walking to and from collection points.

Using the right personal protective equipment for a job can lower your costs and increase worker safety.

Asking questions can reveal more complicated answers to supply challenges and lead to better solutions.

Are you using the right supplies in your manufacturing facility? Using the wrong industrial supplies can cost you quite a bit of money.

During a recent *MSC webinar*, Mike Happel, associate director of procurement for Kimberly-Clark, and Bill Triolo, a business development manager for Kimberly-Clark, discussed 10 ways that having the wrong industrial supplies can waste money.

The webinar was designed to help facilities spot the things that are costing them money or putting their workforce at risk. Triolo said there are opportunities to improve every day. "Just because you've done something one way for the past number of years doesn't mean it's not worth taking a look at," he said.

So what are the supply mistakes that facilities often make? Here are the insights Happel and Triolo described in the webinar.

#1: Not Knowing How All the Products Affect the Process Can Lead to Expensive Defects in

Your Products

For example, Happel said, an automotive manufacturer had to scrap products every month because of water marks. It turned out that the pre-impregnated wipers it was using for cleaning parts, when combined with a solvent used to prepare parts for painting, were causing the water marks. "Better visual management on containers for solvents and knowledge of chemical compatibility with wiping material ... led to a 94 percent reduction in paint defects along with reduced chemical and wiper costs," Happel said.

#2: If the Wrong Gloves Are Provided, Employees Will Find Workarounds

Facilities need the right personal protective equipment for the task at hand. For instance, leather gloves provide some protection but little dexterity. Workers may remove the gloves to complete certain tasks and may not put them back on, increasing the risk of injuries. Cut-resistant gloves may provide both the dexterity and protection needed for a task. "Workarounds may be a symptom that PPE is not fit for a task and that workers may be compromising safety to get the job done," Happel said.

#3: It's Important to Use the Right Tools for the Job

Choosing new materials and supplies may lower costs. For instance, a manufacturer using cloth rags lowered costs by switching to disposable wipers. That's because the variable quality and size of low-cost cloth rags led to a lot of them being thrown away. The rags also took up space in a stockroom and later, after being disposed of, in a landfill. In some instances, the low-quality rags led to product defects. Switching to a disposable wiper reduced disposal costs by 88 percent.

Safety Managers: Want to find the right PPE customized to your workforce? Browse our interactive Safety Products Selector.

#4: Time Workers Spend Collecting Supplies Is Time Away from Work

Having supplies like wipers near where workers need them saves time and reduces the risk of injuries as workers move around the facility. "Supplies that are in portable dispensers or packages that can be placed at point of use eliminate waste in motion as well as the risk of slips and falls," Happel said.

#5: Worker Fatigue Can Reduce Efficiency Goals

"Noise, heat and repetitive tasks are listed as some of the top leading indicators for worker fatigue," Happel said, noting that fatigue at work results in about \$136 billion of lost productivity each year. "It is important to provide PPE and other engineered solutions that can lessen the impact of such factors on the employee."

#6: Workers Need to Be Comfortable and Safe

Finding a middle ground between PPE's utility and fit is vital to worker safety. "PPE needs to be evaluated for comfort and usability, as well as for the safe completion of a task," Happel said. Triolo presented a case study of a client whose workers had been tearing PPE garments to increase their flexibility or wearing sizes that were too large. By finding a more flexible and better-fitting garment, the

manufacturer reduced costs on PPE suits by 21 percent.

#7: PPE That Meets a Worker's Specific Needs Saves Time and Money

Happel noted, for example, that welders often need to work in both light and dark environments, and they can spend up to 3 percent of their day lifting and nodding the visors on their welding helmets. "If a helmet can be used for tasks in light and dark environments and doesn't strain the worker to remove it, they save time and avoid potential injury," Happel said. Changing to a visor that uses an auto-darkening filter can save up to 16 minutes a day.

"Just because you've done something one way for the past number of years doesn't mean it's not worth taking a look at."

Bill Triolo

Business Development Manager, Kimberly-Clark

#8: Keeping Chemicals Safe Keeps Workers Safe

Switching from potentially explosive aerosol cans to pre-saturated wipers can prevent the risk of containers combusting. Though chemical storage itself may be *up to code*, the containers may present a hazard when in use. "Aerosols can explode at relatively low ambient temperatures, just 120 degrees Fahrenheit. So the risk is very real and doesn't require extreme temperatures to pose a significant safety hazard at work," Happel said.

#9: Keep Asking Why When Safety Products Aren't Working

A seemingly simple problem may have a more complicated answer. Happel related the story of a client that used an unusual number of safety glasses. "The safety manager assumed people were simply careless or the glasses were made of poor quality," he said. Instead, a health and safety professional delved deeper and discovered that workers were removing their glasses frequently because they were uncomfortable and fogged up in the high-humidity facility. The glasses were discarded after a few days because of scratching caused when workers wiped off the fog on their clothes and rags. The solution was using the right tool for the environment: comfortable glasses with an anti-fog coating.

#10: Solving Little Problems Can Lead to Big Savings

An automotive manufacturer was struggling with paint defects caused by wiper lint. Engineers initially thought switching to a lint-free material could solve the issue, but they discovered that the perforations in the wipers were causing the problem. Switching to pre-cut wipers eliminated the perforations and lowered the lint level, leading to fewer defects and big savings.

Happel encourages manufacturers to take a close look at their processes and get input, such as a safety inspection, from an outside source. He also suggested that manufacturers solicit input from their workers.

"Listen to the pulse of your work team—don't be afraid to ask why," Happel said. "This team works with the ins and outs of the process on a daily basis and can help to make it better."

How is your company working on continuous improvement efforts with worker safety? Share your thoughts.

