



Floor Maintenance Practices and the Use of Visual Markings for Traffic Flow

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Overview: The COVID-19 global pandemic has caused retail facilities to manage customer traffic flow differently to follow public health recommendations for social distancing. The use of visual communication tools, such as signs, floor stickers, and other floor markings, has implications for floor safety and floor maintenance practices.

This document discusses the considerations associated with the use of various options for visual communication tools and the implications on floor maintenance practices.

Background:

When pandemics, such as COVID-19, reach the level of widespread community transmission, the pathogen will be easily transmitted from person to person. Public health practices will require the use of social distancing to reduce the potential for person to person transmission. For retail facilities with brick and mortar facilities (i.e. grocery stores, general merchandise big box retailers, specialty retailers, clothing stores, and appliance stores), few retail facilities previously used social distancing practices within their facilities. As a consequence, retail facilities are rapidly adopting social distancing practices for staff and customers, including:

- Limiting the number of people allowed in the store at one time
- Controlling the distance between staff and customers
- Limiting crowding by requiring customers to stay 6 feet (1.8 m) apart while in the store
- Indicating waiting locations for customers queued at counters and the check-out areas to ensure proper social distancing
- Directing customer traffic flow in certain directions (i.e. making aisles one-way for foot traffic) to make maintaining social distancing easier

To guide customers on how to follow the required in-store practices, visual communication tools are rapidly being adopted and implemented. Currently there are no standard recommendations from the CDC or other government groups for retail facilities for visual communication tools to guide social distancing by the public. Visual communication tools are being rapidly developed and implemented nonetheless. Key considerations, such as size, content, material, placement, and mix of communication tools are often developed with an emphasis on speed of implementation, which can have a negative impact in other areas, such as floor safety and floor maintenance programs.

Concerns about message awareness and effectiveness, impact on customer safety, and impact on store maintenance procedures are surfacing with increased frequency as a result. Visual communication tools have the potential to cause issues with standard floor maintenance procedures. As the leading global provider of



floor maintenance solutions for retail facilities, this document discusses a range of concerns associated with floor maintenance and provides Diversey's perspective on the election of in-store visual communication tools.

Key Issues:

A number of issues associated with the implementation of visual communication tools have been identified including:

- Use of floor stickers made from materials not UL-410 approved, creating slip-fall concerns.
- Store maintenance procedures damaging floor stickers by lifting edges, tearing, scuffing, or otherwise damaging the stickers.
- Markings on the floor that are wearing off from burnishing or other floor maintenance procedures.
- Signs that obstruct aisles, preventing standard floor maintenance procedures.

Recommended Practices:

In reviewing this issue, it became clear that there is no single best practice, but rather retail facilities will likely need a range of visual communication tools to effectively communicate with customers. Visual communication tool options include:

1. **Floor stickers.** Floor stickers are generally a poor choice as a visual communication tool. Compliance with instructions on the floor is low and placing stickers on the floor can interfere with floor maintenance procedures. Floor stickers are best viewed as a short-term solution while better long term solutions are being implemented. When floor stickers are used, they should be:
 - a. Made from UL-410 approved materials to ensure the stickers are slip-resistant.
 - b. The glue used should be easily removed during floor stripping and should not damage the finish but strong enough to prevent stickers from peeling while in use.
 - c. Floor stickers should be placed in areas not maintained by floor machines, such as between checkout counters, and not on main traffic flooring which may require the use of a burnisher or scrubber-drier (autoscrubber).
 - d. Stickers should be removed and replaced frequently to ensure that as they wear they are not causing a slip-trip-fall hazard by splitting, peeling, cracking, or detaching from the floor.
 - e. Floor stickers should never be top coated with finish as this can cause adhesion issues, creating the potential for a slip-trip-fall risk.
2. **Pathfinder signs.** Signs affixed to walls, floor stands, ends of aisles, and suspended from ceilings can be effective visual communication tools and are favoured by Diversey as the primary visual communication tool. Signs should be:
 - a. Suspended from the ceiling to reduce the risk of collision with the signage, or
 - b. Positioned between shoulder and head height if they can be positioned in a way that does not create a collision risk.



- c. Floor signs should be removable to facilitate floor maintenance, but secured to provide acceptable stability. Floor signs with the communication material below waist height are at increased risk of causing collisions as they can be hard to see.
- 3. **Floor marking.** There are a range of options for floor marking without stickers.
 - a. Some markings are applied on top of the floor finish, including applying magic marker or floor paint to a template. This can be done rapidly but is at risk of premature wear. When markings are applied on top of the floor finish, they are at significant risk of wearing off or being damaged by routine floor maintenance. When floor paints are used on top of finish, they should always be UL-410 approved and tested for adhesion with the finish. When floor paints are used on bare floors, they should always be tested for adhesion on the flooring.
 - b. Other markings are applied under the finish, such as magic markers and floor paint applied to a template after stripping the floor, but before refinishing the floor. Any markers or paint applied directly to the bare floor should be tested for compatibility to ensure it does not damage the floor. Applying markings under the floor finish should only be done if it can be done without damaging the underlying floor and does not cause adhesion issues with the floor finish.
- 4. **Tile Replacement.** Certain floor tiles can be removed and replaced with contrasting colors to provide a visual indicator on the floor. This practice can be moderately effective, but should be paired with signage to be highly effective.

Summary:

This document discussed important considerations associated with the use of various options for visual communication tools and how the selection of certain tools may have implications on floor maintenance practices. If there are any questions about this document, please contact Diversey Customer Service.