



Safety

Preventing Slips and Falls: How Brady SPC Soaks Up Shop-Floor Hazards

James Langford | Jun 06, 2024

Among the most hazardous spots in the American workplace is one all employees encounter every day: the floor.

It's the site of slips, trips and falls where *thousands of injuries* severe enough to require time off occurred in the 12 months through September 2022, the most recent period for which statistics were available.

Those falls don't have to be from a high level to be dangerous: The National Safety Council says 144 workers were killed in falls on the *same level* in 2022.

The risks are compounded in manufacturing facilities and machine shops, where greasy surfaces or spills and leaks of machining lubricants and cleaning fluids can make walkways treacherous.

Safety supplier Brady SPC offers an arsenal of tools to help keep workers in those environments safe, from all-purpose absorbents designed to soak up a variety of liquids and chemicals to emergency-response spill kits.

Not only is cleanup the responsibility of employers under U.S. workplace safety laws, but the Occupational Safety and Health Administration has also established specific requirements under *Standard 1910.120* for dealing with materials that the government designates as hazardous.

The agency imposed *\$277,369 in fines* for violations of that rule last year, with manufacturers responsible for almost half.

"When you think about the need for absorbents, there are two major reasons," says Mike Ellis, national sorbent specialist for Brady SPC. "The most important is employee safety. First and foremost, absorbents are used to make sure that employees are not slipping on wet surfaces or being exposed to caustic substances."

The second reason, he says, is to prevent the release of chemicals into the environment through drainage systems and waterways.



Brady SPC's printed absorbent mats warn of possible slipping, tripping and falling hazards. | Photo courtesy of Brady SPC

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Once businesses identify their needs, they can begin to consider the options for dealing with them. Brady SPC products are geared toward the "entire range of the market in terms of customer preference, price points and product-quality needs," Ellis says.

The keys to choosing the best absorbent include identifying the liquids it will pick up and how it will be used, whether it's to simply wipe up a drip or to keep a high-traffic zone safe for workers and forklifts.

To optimize selections, Brady SPC suggests the following steps:

- **1. Know what you're absorbing**
 - **Water- or Oil-Based Fluids:** Brady SPC recommends universal absorbents that can be used around machinery, under leaky pipes, in messy traffic areas or for general maintenance projects. The company's Re-Form™ universal absorbents made of recycled materials offer an environmentally friendly solution for dealing with materials such as coolants, solvents, gasoline, kerosene, vegetable oil and latex paint.
 - **Oil-Based Fluids Outdoors/Water Repelling:** Brady SPC recommends oil-only Absorbents. Designed to handle petroleum-based spills including paints and non-water soluble chemicals, these absorbents will not soak up water and can float indefinitely. Brady SPC's Re-Form™ oil-only absorbents are suitable for fluids such as hydraulic oil, motor oil, brake fluid, cooking oil, turpentine and lubricants.
 - **Hazardous Chemical Fluids:** Brady SPC recommends chemical absorbents. Its surfactant-treated polypropylene absorbents can be used on a wide range of chemicals, including hydrofluoric acid. They are chemically inert, so they will not react with aggressive fluids. Since absorbents take on the properties of whatever they absorb, the bright colors of these absorbents provide a visual reminder to separate waste streams. They can be used with materials such as acids and bases, citric acid, sodium hydroxide and aggressive chemicals.

- **2. Identify Your Application**

- **General purpose wiping, drips and leaks:** Brady SPC recommends pads, rolls, SOCs and pillows. Pre-cut pads and perforated rolls provide easy access to absorbents for general-purpose use around your facility. Use specialized SOCs and pillows around or underneath dripping equipment.
- **Heavy foot and forklift traffic:** Brady SPC recommends absorbent mats and rugs. Mats and rugs offer greater durability to withstand harsh conditions. Barrier-backed options prevent liquid from penetrating the absorbent and reaching the floor underneath while printed mats warn of possible slipping, tripping and falling hazards.
- **Emergency spill response:** Brady SPC recommends spill kits, pallets and drain plugs. Spill kits bundle together all of the products needed to clean up an unexpected spill. Other containment options include spill pallets, drain plugs and absorbent storage centers.
- **Special situations:** Brady SPC offers marine and granular products. Marine environments require boom, sweep and drag nets to remove fluids in or near bodies of water. Granular absorbents are available when loose absorbents are preferred or when acid/base neutralization is required prior to spill cleanup.

- **3. Select Absorbent Features**

- **Coverstock:** Durability of an absorbent increases with the addition of a coverstock layer, Brady SPC says. For simple drips or leaks, a 1-ply absorbent is often all you need, but for wiping or in areas with foot traffic, a 3-ply absorbent provides the necessary durability. For abrasive applications, a pad with spunbond coverstock helps to reduce linting or tearing.
- **Absorbency weight:** This can make a significant difference in how much product is required. For small spills, choose a light- or medium-weight product to avoid waste. For large spills or continuous leaks, choose a heavyweight product to reduce total material used.
- **Surface dimpling:** Dimpling increases product strength for areas that require extra durability. Smooth absorbents have greater surface area and are more absorbent per square inch compared with similarly constructed, dimpled products.

“When we’re talking with customers, we tend to ask questions like, ‘How long will that product stay on the floor?’ and ‘Is it walked on?’” Ellis says. “That’s where we start when we make recommendations. We’re showing them value, solving a need for them and also making them safer.”

What types of spills does your business need to clean up most often? Tell us in the comments below

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