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7 principles to help keep your food plant flooring safe and hygienic

Food safety presents a constant cause of concern. It is high on the agenda for food producers, resellers and consumers alike. A simple slip in the food hygiene standards can cost companies millions, not to mention loss of reputation and damaged brands.

Maintaining food processing environments and especially flooring hygiene and safety presents specific challenges for food and beverage manufacturers. The food hygiene legislation (Regulation (EC) No 852/2004 and the Food Safety and Hygiene (England) Regs 2013 states that:

- Floor surfaces must be maintained in a sound condition and be easy to clean and, where necessary, to disinfect. Floors should also be non slip and durable.
- They must be made from materials that are impervious (ie do not allow fluid to pass through) and non-absorbent. Thermoplastic coverings, terrazzo and epoxy resins may be suitable.
- Where appropriate, floors must allow adequate surface drainage that is laid to falls so that the waste water flows to a drain or channel.
- The junction between walls and floors or floors and fixed equipment should be coved, to allow for easy cleaning.

What can you do to ensure that floors at your food or beverage facility comply with the legislation?

1. Make sure your floors are seamless

Any open joints, cracks or grout lines provide a feeding ground for bacteria. Seamless floors, such as the ones from Stonhard, the world's leading manufacturer and installer of high-quality industrial flooring, are sanitary floors providing no space for organic bacteria to develop or liquids to puddle. Use coving to create a seamless transition between your floor and wall.

2. For added protection against dangerous pathogens, use anti-bacterial coatings

To protect your facility against microbial growth, fungi, mould and potential cross contamination of other surfaces and equipment, use antibacterial coatings, such as Stonhard's Stonplus AM9. This organic thione compound acts as a permanent bacteriostat against a broad range of bacteria and fungi. The active ingredient is EPA-registered and contains no heavy metals.

3. Install floors that are easy to clean

A chemical and stain resistant surface that is easy to clean is the most important factor in choosing a floor. Your floors need to withstand the harsh chemicals, steam and water pressure used for everyday cleaning as well as oxidising agents, solvents and organic acids. For food processing plants, breaking down food on the floor can be very aggressive to the variety of epoxy. A dense urethane flooring will resist the absorption of material into the surface, making for less laborious process during cleanup. Retaining good housekeeping rules is vital. Wipe any spillages and remove any food, dust or debris as soon as they occur. Stubborn fats and oils should be removed by a special degreaser, such as Stonhard's Stonkleen FS9.

4. Make your floors safe

Even in an immaculately maintained environment with the most stringent operations, people can fall on slippery surfaces. Choose slip-resistant, thermal shock-resistant textured surface to protect you staff and visitors against any accidents. Slip-resistant floors prevent falls. Wet surfaces, combined with heavy human and machine traffic, increase the chances of injuries or accidents.

Textured floors protect against accidents, even when wet. Stonhard's Stonclad UT is urethane-based formulation with a textured surface used extensively by the food processing industry around the world. The floor system, with its dense, impervious surface, resists the kinds of food acids and chemicals commonly found in the processing environment whilst retaining superior anti-slip characteristics. What's more, Stonclad UT comes with a HACCP Accreditation (Hazard Analysis And Critical Control Points) approval, meaning it's highly suitable for food preparation, packaging and food processing, preventing possible biological, chemical and physical hazards.

5. Pitch your floors to drains

We know this sounds obvious, but to provide effective drainage, floors should be pitched to drains at 1% or 2%. Unsanitary microbes thrive in excess stagnating water. Poured floors can be sloped away from equipment for removal of all overflow or waste water, minimising any puddles being created as a result of poor drainage. Polymer flooring overlay can be a relatively inexpensive way of updating your existing concrete floor, without the need for removing the floor altogether.

6. Do not compromise on the design

Just because your floor needs to be seamless, chemical, slip, thermal shock and impact resistant doesn't mean it has to look uninspiring. Stonhard offers a great choice of standard and customised colours and blends, with looks to satisfy creative and demanding design specifications. Logos, signage to create walkways, design features. There are no limits.

7. Consider the environment

With sustainability high on the agenda for any business, choosing a flooring that's environmental friendly will demonstrate your commitment to the environment and help you meet regulations and low emissions criteria. Stonhard's polymer flooring systems have a low VOC content, utilising sustainable or recycled materials where possible. Due to the health hazards associated with lead and chromium compounds, the lead sulfochromate based yellow pigment has been removed from their production process and over 90% of new product development and reformulation efforts are geared to water based urethanes or 100% solid epoxy based chemistry, providing safer floors and reducing hazardous waste.

Seamless poured floors can be installed quickly (some in less than two days), minimising disruption to your production. As they require minimum repairs and they stay in place for a long time, they offer a sustainable solution to food processing flooring problem. Maintenance is simple and neat, without the constant need to repair 'loose' tiles. Seamless flooring provides a great long-term return on investment.

Choosing the right floor and finish, especially when you process, produce, package or store food or beverage products, is vital to ensure you run a safe, hygienic facility meeting all regulatory requirements.



About Stonhard

Stonhard is the world leading manufacturer and installer of high-performance seamless polymer floor, wall and lining systems. Unlike other competitors, we take full responsibility for installation, covering both products and workmanship under a single warranty. For more information, please visit www.stonhard.co.uk.

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