



Get FSMA Ready with Color-Coded Tools

On Jan. 4, 2011, President Obama signed into law the Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA), updating current food safety practices. The goal of this legislation is transitioning from a culture of reaction to one of prevention in food safety. While this overhaul affects the entire food and beverage processing industry, many insiders are still unfamiliar with its impact on daily operations.

How Remco can help

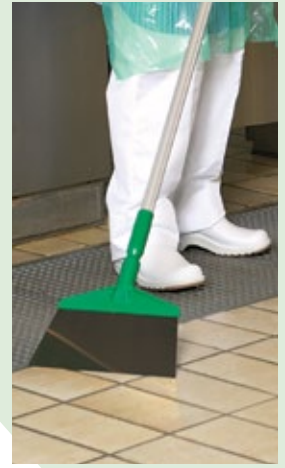
Remco Products and its Denmark-based partner Vikan offer a range of color-coded cleaning and material handling tools that help food manufacturers create and maintain barriers from contamination. Good Manufacturing Practices (GMPs) and Hazard Analysis and Critical Control Points (HACCP) plans specify the segregation of raw materials and finished products. These key requirements are the foundation of a food safety planning

process aimed at protecting food products and making them safe for human consumption. Identifying potential areas of cross-contamination from microbiological, physical or chemical hazards is one of the first steps that facilities must take in complying with FSMA.



“Using color-coded tools in raw material areas, in-process and finished product areas within a facility is a simple way to prevent microbiological cross-contamination between those areas,” says Cristal Garrison, director of training and development. “Color coding of equipment, tools and materials based on environmental monitoring programs or sanitation environmental zones protects food contact surfaces and prevents them from being contaminated or cross-contaminated.”

Remco’s tools also help staff become more confident in making certain food safety decisions.



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Tools to Use in Becoming FSMA Prepared

Remco Products, Inc., Zionsville, Ind., offers a short list of how to become FSMA ready.

- Network and utilize all resources and guidance documents provided by the FDA.
- Use color to delineate high-risk production areas.
- Contrast colors with food products to ensure thorough cleaning and sanitizing efforts.
- Make sure employees can differentiate between colors according to the color-coding plan.
- Document, post and keep up-to-date color-coding plans.
- Request certificates of FDA compliance for products that come in contact with food.
- Get all staff on board, including management.

“Visual color cues easily define high-risk areas, equipment or tools,” says Garrison. “For example, tools used in handling products that contain a known allergen may have a specific and easily identifiable color. Also, particular areas of a facility (and the tools in those areas) may be color coded to delineate between ready-to-eat areas and ‘high-risk’ areas where raw foods are found.”

Often times, facilities go beyond simply identifying allergens and areas by utilizing additional contrast colors that ensure proper cleaning and sanitizing efforts.

“Sourcing tools that are color coded, hygienically designed and properly documented as food safe makes it easier for a company to manage their sanitation and material handling programs and processes,” says Garrison. “When it comes to food safety audits or inspections, being able to point to a clearly defined set of tools and processes typically improves outcomes.”

However, there is no specific tool or color that is most suitable from a compliance standpoint.

“Compliance is achieved through ongoing hazard analysis, proper management of preventive controls and monitoring, verification and proper handling of corrective actions,” adds Garrison. “Color coding is simply one part of the complete food safety program.”

Keeping up with FSMA requirements may seem like a daunting task, but with the help of Remco’s color-coded tools and industry expertise, achieving a thorough food safety process has never been easier.

“Food companies are the experts on their products and processes; they should be confident in their products and be proud to prove that they are manufactured in sanitary and safe environments,” adds Garrison. “Food safety shouldn’t be a competitive advantage; it’s something we all expect when we sit down to eat a meal.” **RP**