

Loading ramp safety hazards: How to prevent accidents

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By Form-A-Tread Company, division of RGF Materials Company (LLC)

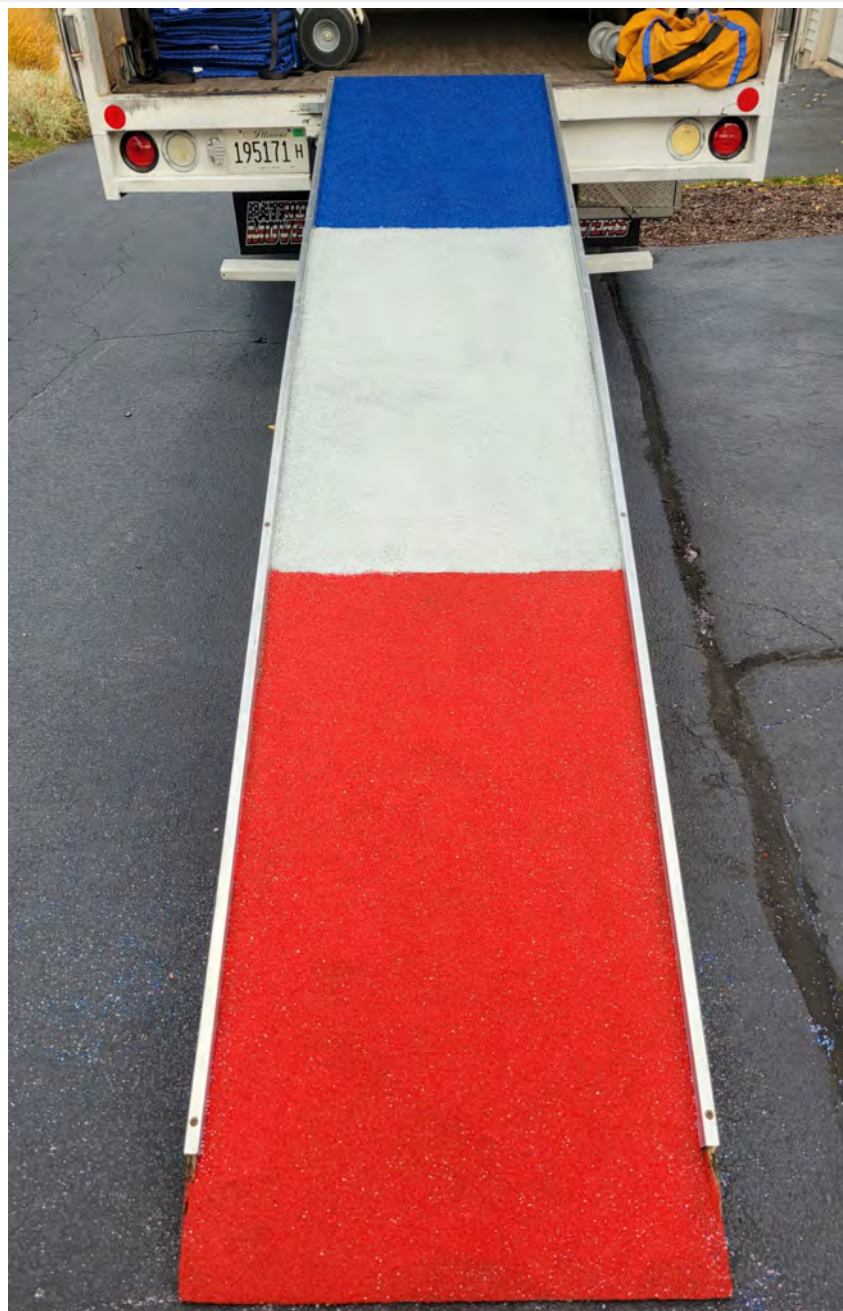


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The nation's largest franchised moving company is minimizing slip and fall risks with a new type of durable, non-skid safety coating that increases

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traction and reduces maintenance on truck ramps

In trucking, moving, storage, and warehousing, personnel often rely on ramps to load and unload a wide variety of heavy or bulky items such as pallets, large boxes, furniture, and appliances from ground level. Ensuring good footing and proper traction going up and down these ramps is critical not only for safety, but particularly in wet or humid conditions where the ramps can become slick and pose a slip and fall hazard.

"It is essential that moving ramps have good traction because our moving teams across the country face a multitude of weather patterns and we don't dictate what the franchisees require for footwear," said Ryan Boyer, safety and risk specialist at TWO MEN AND A TRUCK®/International, LLC. "So, one way we can be consistent in promoting safety is at the point of contact on every ramp." TWO MEN AND A TRUCK, the largest franchised moving company in the United States is headquartered in Lansing, Michigan and has more than 405 locations and over 3,000 trucks on the road. The moving company has franchises in 47 U.S. states in addition to the United Kingdom, Canada, and Ireland.

To increase traction, ramp manufacturers typically apply a slip-resistant coating to the surface, but it can wear quickly and needs to be restored frequently. Conventional surface restoration products, however, can be difficult to use, have an offensive odor, and lack longevity.

"The standard grit on our fiberglass ramps initially provided traction, but quickly wore out and would not last much longer than a year. Our franchisees were annually resurfacing the ramps outdoors [with an OEM restoration product] due to the strong odor and long cure times," said Boyer. He points out that purchasing new ramps was seldom feasible due to the high cost and an order backlog of up to 11 months in some cases.

Fortunately, a new category of durable, high-tech, all-epoxy coating is dramatically increasing traction and improving safety on truck ramps. This new type of coating is designed to last for years even in high use, harsh weather environments, which reduces the need for maintenance and replacement. The coating can be quickly and easily applied without a primer, minimizing cost and disruption.

Improving truck ramp traction and safety

At TWO MEN AND A TRUCK, Boyer and his team coordinate with the moving company's domestic franchise groups to promote safety, regulatory compliance, and industry best practices.

"We want our personnel to deliver world-class moving services, and the only way we can do that is if they can move items safely and consistently. So, it is important that our moving ramps provide good traction in all weather conditions," said Boyer.

After research and consultation, TWO MEN AND A TRUCK had a safety coating manufacturer apply the non-skid coating called Form-A-Tread® SL (Self

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Leveling) on a ramp to demonstrate the effectiveness of the product at their headquarters. Unlike similar products, the coating is non-flammable, low odor, and can be installed indoors. The coating provides a durable, slip-resistant surface on surfaces like ramps, walkways, concourses, industrial flooring, and other large areas with high pedestrian or vehicle traffic.

Boyer was impressed with the safety coating's ease of installation. "When they resurfaced the ramp in our lobby, there was essentially no odor, and it was ready for use much faster [than the previous coating they were using]," he said.

The coating, which comes in a kit, is easy to mix and apply by hand. Installation is fast and typically ready for use in under four hours. It can be applied to composite, aluminum, steel, wood, and other porous and non-porous substrates. Each kit can fully restore the surface of two 14-foot, single fiberglass composite ramps or two 14-foot, split fiberglass composite ramps.

The most critical factor for Boyer, was the coating's ability to provide superior traction along with longevity. In this regard, the coating exceeded his expectations.

The all-epoxy safety product is a combination of a low-to-medium viscosity, 100% solids epoxy binder and a hard-wearing aggregate that achieves a Dynamic Coefficient of Friction (DCOF) value of 0.76, well above industry standards. The formulation, along with topically applied aggregate, is designed to last for years even when exposed to extreme weather, temperature, sea spray, sunlight, and chemicals. Due to the anti-slip coating's excellent traction and wear, it is used in some of the nation's top commercial properties and entertainment venues to improve safety and reduce maintenance.

Consequently, Boyer and TWO MEN AND A TRUCK's safety specialists approved Form-A-Tread SL after the successful demonstration for use by the moving company's American franchisees, though it is not mandated, the feedback in the field has been very positive.

"The traction is so much better [than our previous restoration kit]. It provides a better surface contact point for footwear especially in wet or snowy weather. Every franchisee I've spoken with said their moving personnel rave about it. They can tell when they are using a ramp without the product and want it applied on all their ramps," Boyer said.

The new coating on the resurfaced ramps is much more durable. "Some of our franchisees have now used the recoated ramps for more than two years and the coating is still in great shape," he added.

Boyer points out that substantial savings can accrue in preventing slip and fall injuries as well as in reduced maintenance.

"Even avoiding one slip and fall accident, injury, or worker's comp claim could pay for the all-epoxy coating many times over. And operations managers are no longer having to spend hours every year resurfacing ramps," said Boyer.

He notes that the all-epoxy coating costs only a little more than the previous coating but is actually quite economical due to its increased safety and longevity.

According to Boyer, the coating's exceptional adhesion also resolved an issue that previously could not be addressed with a conventional coating.

"The metal side rails that go up a ramp can be slippery but do not typically have an anti-slip coating. The Form-A-Tread product allowed us to coat the rails to provide safe traction, which was a game changer for many of our franchisees," said Boyer.

Based on this success, Boyer believes that the anti-skid coating could be applied to a wide range of ramps. "The coating could provide an additional layer of traction on many ramp types including aluminum washboard style," he said.

As a safety specialist, Boyer sees how the anti-skid coating could significantly improve safety for trucking, moving, and warehousing.

"We are working in a climate right now where our employees are more important than ever. Why not give them the best opportunity to do their jobs safely? We want them to go up and down ramps without losing traction whether they are carrying a gun safe, piano, or anything else," said Boyer.

He adds, "We have found that [the Form-A-Tread anti-skid coating] has contributed to a safer working environment for our teams. We would love to see the product at more of our franchise locations soon. It is a good, long-lasting product that will help to ensure personnel safety for many years, keeping them healthy and on the job."

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