

Common Line Marking Paint Mistakes to Avoid



Line markings provide safety. They direct traffic, organize parking lots, and lay out sports fields. But proper line markings require more than the application of paint.

Rushed painters make mistakes. Shortcut painters make mistakes. Here are the most common line marking paint mistakes and how to avoid each one.

Not Prepping the Surface

This is the biggest mistake of all. Many painters can't wait to start painting. They want to skip straight to this step and get the job done. Don't do that!

Line paint must have a clean, dry surface to adhere to. Dirt, oil residue, dust, and standing water on the surface will cause paint to peel, flake, or wear away prematurely. You'll lose hours of your day having to redo the work.

Take some time before painting to sweep or blow away any loose debris. Use a degreaser for oily stains. Concrete or asphalt can usually be washed with a pressure washer. Make sure the surface is completely dry before painting over it. Trim grass as short as possible before painting lines on it. Adding paint is the quickest step. Proper preparation will take longer than painting.

Choosing the Wrong Paint

Not all paint is created equal. Different paints are designed for asphalt versus concrete, grass versus sidewalks, and indoor floors versus outdoor roads. There are water-based paints and solvent-based options. You can buy high-traffic line paint and temporary paint for sports fields.

Using line paint that isn't designed for its intended use is a mistake a lot of people make.

Paint not made for a certain surface will fade, peel, crack, or become slippery quickly. Indoor paint, if used outside, may break down from exposure to the sun and rain.

Match your paint to the surface you plan to paint. Consider traffic flow and weather conditions as well. High traffic areas like parking lots or warehouse floors see tons of foot and vehicle traffic. Choose [epoxy](#) or [thermoplastic coatings](#) for these surfaces as they last longer than traditional paints. For painted lines on grass, choose a paint specially formulated for natural or artificial turf.

Bad Measurements

You can't eyeball a line and expect it to come out looking straight. Many inexperienced painters skip the planning process and dive right into painting. Then they wonder why they ended up with crooked lines.

Lines painted in the wrong place can cause problems. Parking spaces that are the wrong size or misplaced waste space and cause traffic issues. Mis-sized fields no longer meet official sport regulations. Lines in warehouses that aren't perfectly straight can create forklift traffic jams and worker accidents.

Plan your painting project before opening any paint cans. Use a tape measure and chalk or tape to lay out where your lines will be. Paint guides can also be made from stretched strings. Measure twice and then measure once more. Check online for dimensions if there are official guidelines.

Draw a scaled scope of the area on paper. It doesn't have to be perfect. You can usually spot problems by sketching them out first.

Painting in Bad Weather

Line paint isn't magically immune to bad weather. Painting in poor conditions will result in poor looking lines. But what qualifies as bad weather?

Rain is an obvious problem. Line paint won't stick to wet surfaces. Rain falling on fresh paint will wash the paint right off the surface. Hot temperatures and windy days cause problems too. Heat will make paint dry too fast. Wind blows overspray away.

Ideally, you want to paint when temperatures are between 50 and 85 degrees Fahrenheit. Aim to paint when there is no humidity, rain expected for several hours, and as little wind as possible.

Check the weather leading up to your project. Don't paint if there is morning dew on the ground. Avoid scorching summer days by painting in the early morning if possible.

Working Too Quickly

Hurried painters cause multiple issues with lines. Moving too quickly when you paint creates thin spots. Lines end up incomplete, with gaps and fuzzy edges.

Take your time when using a roller or paint sprayer. Keep the paint 6-12 inches from the surface and at a slow, consistent speed. Start spraying before you reach your starting point and release the trigger after passing your endpoint. Apply steady pressure as you paint.

Line marking machines have speed settings. Know how fast the machine goes at each setting. Practice your technique in another area if possible. It's better to make one slow, even pass than two rushed ones.

Not Cleaning Your Equipment

The state of your painting equipment also causes lines to fail. Dirt or damaged parts don't apply paint evenly. Clogged spray nozzles spray unevenly. Line marking machines with bent wheels won't stay on the correct path. Roller covers leave streaks when they are dirty.

Clean any painting equipment after use. Empty spray paint cans should be turned upside down and sprayed until paint no longer comes out. This clears the nozzle and prevents paint from drying inside later. Machine paint lines should be flushed with water after use. Store all equipment in a dry, clean area away from the elements.

Case Study: How Proper Surface Preparation Helped Extend Line Marking Life in Airport Graphics

Issue: One of the most frequent causes of line marking failure is not paint problems but insufficient preparation of the surface prior to painting.

Example: This example provided by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) stresses the need to prepare pavement surfaces before applying new airport line markings:

Runways, taxiways, and airport parking areas are subjected to continual wear from aircraft traffic, jet fuel spills, weather, and rubber leaving the tires of aircraft as they take off and land. The best defense against these tough conditions is to apply pavement markings to a clean, properly prepared surface.

Pre-existing pavement markings should be removed or otherwise sufficiently cleaned to expose the original pavement surface before new markings are applied. Rubber deposits, dirt, oil and other surface contaminants can cause the paint not to adhere properly and result in premature fading, peeling and reduced retroreflectivity.

Solution: This advice applies to airport markings but is just as true for carpark paint markings, warehouse floor paint, sports surface graphics and roadway lines. Whether you're using a professional line marker machine or applying paint by hand, take the time to prepare the surface and your line markings will last much longer.

Read the full Case Study:

<https://couperoadmarkings.co.uk/common-line-marking-mistakes-that-lead-to-early-failure/>

Line Marking FAQ: Avoid These Painting Mistakes

How long should paint for line marking last?

Line marking paint will last for many years if applied correctly. The type of surface, paint used, traffic levels, and exposure to sunlight and weather will affect durability of parking lot striping, road lines and warehouse floor paint. Heavily trafficked areas will fade faster than roads, surfaces or parking areas that don't receive

frequent use. Preparation of the surface, using the correct traffic paint for the job and applying the right paint thickness are key factors for long-lasting line markings.

Why is line marking paint peeling or fading?

Paint that is peeling or fading can be caused by poor surface preparation, using the wrong type of paint, or marking in unsuitable weather conditions. Dirt, moisture, oil and loose debris will stop paint from adhering to asphalt, concrete or sports courts. Make sure you use [outdoor line marking paint](#) that is suitable for the surface you need to paint. Choosing the right paint will reduce the chances of your paint work failing prematurely.

Can I line paint after rain?

It's best not to apply paint after rain as the surface may still be damp. Moisture in porous asphalt or concrete may hinder adhesion even if the surface feels dry. Make sure the surface is dry before applying paint and check the weather forecast to avoid any rain while the paint is curing.

What paint should I use for parking lot lines?

It depends on the surface you're painting and how much heavy vehicle traffic will use the area. Water based traffic paints are popular for parking lots as they dry quickly and work on both asphalt and concrete. If you are line marking an industrial floor or a high wear area we recommend more durable epoxy or thermoplastic line marking paints.

How do professional line markers paint straight lines?

Pros don't eyeball line markings! They use measuring tools, chalk lines, templates, laser guides, and professional line marker machines to get line markings in the right place. Planning your line marking design ahead of painting allows professionals to create straight parking bays, sports courts, warehouse walkways, and road markings every time.

How do I prepare a surface before line marking?

Surface preparation can include removing dirt, dust, oil, loose stones, sand and damaged paint before line marking. Line marking contractors often sweep, blow, pressure wash or use specialist equipment to clean surfaces before applying paint. Never apply paint to a damp surface.

Final Words

When done correctly, line markings can last for years. But maintenance is needed. Sun, traffic, and weather will break down paint eventually. Line painting is not a set-it-and-forget-it deal. You should plan to reapply faded lines every few months. Pay attention to areas that get heavy use or direct sunlight. Touch these areas up before they completely disappear.

Markings that are no longer visible are dangerous. Taking care of line markings will keep people and vehicles where they should be.