OAKHURST MARKETING

HOME

SIGNS:

- Sign Monuments
- Routed Signs
- Sandblasted Signs
- Electric Signs
- Site Signs & Banners
- Interior Signs & Displays

MARKETING:

- Marketing Services

Education Center

Picking the Right Sign Materials:

Make sure you know what material fits your specific needs (more)

The Oakhurst Advantage:

Quick turn-around and outstanding customer service makes Oakhurst the right choice.(more)

Choosing ADA-Compliant Signage Material

Back to education center
downloadable PDF

Deciding which material to suggest to clients depends on their budget, environment and design restrictions. But price is not the predominant factor anymore. Quality and performance are becoming larger priorities as businesses and institutions accept the reality that ADA-compliant signage is here to stay. Keep in mind that the material is as important as the message because if the material fails, then the message is lost.

Let's look at some of the more common materials on the market today and learn which is most appropriate for different budgets, environments and designs.

Designing for Durability

Outdoor signage is prone to all sorts of weather and other forms of wear and tear. Outdoor signage, then, demands materials that will not fade, chip, peel, delaminate or crack. Experts recommend sticking to high-impact plastics, metal letters and one-piece signs in these environments. One-piece signs are just as their name suggests - signs made from one piece of material so that vandals cannot remove letters.

“Magnesium is a one-piece ADA product,” says Kathy Wilson, spokesperson for Advance Corporation, a manufacturer of architecturally designed interior/exterior way-finding sign systems and standard and custom ADA-compliant signs in Cottage Grove, Minn. “We suggest using magnesium material in interior and exterior environments that are rugged, have excessive cleaning requirements, and are susceptible to graffiti, such as schools and universities, hotels, and hospitals.”

Zinc is another material that is well suited for outdoor environments. Like magnesium, Wilson recommends zinc for environments that are extremely tough, have excessive cleaning requirements, and are susceptible to graffiti. But she says zinc is typically used for ADA signage in transit systems, prisons, sports facilities and hospitals.

“The most durable product for subway systems is one-piece metal signs, like zinc or bronze, with chemically etched letters so that the raised letters cannot be removed or scratched,” says Hersey.

"This is a more expensive process but is relatively vandal-proof."

Interior Applications

While any of the outdoor materials could be used for interior environments, there are some materials, like photopolymer, that are best suited for indoor only. Photopolymer is a thin sheet of aluminum that is embossed and painted on its surface.

"Photopolymer typically does not work well for outdoor applications because it is painted on the surface," says Hersey. "Signs that are painted on the surface are very easily scratched and pretty soon you will see the aluminum underneath. It's better to have a product that has a subsurface application so that if you scratch it from the surface it is not going to affect the paint."

Wilson warns against using photopolymer in environments such as basements, pools, saunas, glass and windows with exposure to UV, salt-sea air (cruise lines), and buildings with poor humidity control.

When Price Matters

Beyond environment and durability issues, price is often a major consideration. When price matters, sign makers should turn to less expensive materials and processes - just make sure the customer understands the limitations of the products he is choosing.

"When the client requires an interior, solid surface appearance at a reasonable price, resin cast holders and framing units are perfect," says Wilson, noting that this is also a good solution for applications that require signs to be updated or changed frequently.

While chemically etched signs are most durable, engraved signs are most cost-effective. Engraved signs are also the most limited in design and material selections, says Wilson, and the copy on Braille is applied and subject to vandalism.

Change Impacts Material Choices

There is one change to ADA requirements scheduled to come down the pike later this year that will impact what materials are allowable. Hersey says the new regulation will make photopolymer signs obsolete because the material is used for flat top Braille signs and the law is eliminating flat top Braille in exchange for a domed configuration.

"There's going to be a switch in the industry away from photopolymer," predicts Hersey. "Architects love photopolymer because you can do anything with it, but the configuration of the Braille creates a flat surface at the top that will make it non-compliant."

Wilson disagrees. Wilson believes that sign shops will source out to others to manufacture compliant photopolymer products. Wilson states that all of their Braille signs have a "domed" Braille cell configuration. "We go beyond the minimum guidelines to achieve a compliant Braille dot." states Wilson.

"All products have a square Braille dot, or what people call square. We use this technique on all of our products that are etched."

The Changing Face of ADA Signage

While the Access Board is contemplating new changes in the ADA sign requirements, designers are finding creative ways to use materials that are more attractive, according to Robert Fine, an attorney with Greenberg Traurig, who focuses his practice on ADA issues for companies.

“Across the board in a lot of places you see unattractive signs. Many ADA signs are traffic-sign blue,” says Fine. “In more sophisticated projects we are seeing a higher level of design at higher costs.”

Developers spending $300 per square foot on a building project, for example, are beginning to place a greater emphasis on the appearance of public areas. Fine says signs are becoming a larger part of the architectural design - as opposed to an afterthought - and there is a mandate on designers to look at different materials.

“Where you are prohibited from using reflective materials, designers are using etched or frosted glass so you get the richness of the glass material and a wood background, yet it's within the ADA regulations,” says Fine. “Signage by itself really hasn't been the big change. The change is in customizing the visual communication.”

---

web source
http://www.signweb.com/index.php/channel/5/id/index.php/channel/5/id/1650/