

Raising the Bar on Traffic Marking Paint Systems

It's easy to forget about traffic marking paint until it's faded, peeling, or gone entirely. Then accidents can happen. Traffic marking paint defines traffic lanes, designates parking spaces, marks accessible areas, and guides pedestrians and vehicles safely through parking lots, airports, shopping centers, streets, and highways. When they perform well, nobody notices. When they don't, the results can be dangerous and disruptive.

MPI currently has two traffic marking paint categories, and the standards that govern them are evolving. Here's what you need to know.

Current Standards: MPI #32 and MPI #97

MPI maintains two traffic marking paint categories for exterior and interior zone and parking line marking applications:

- **[MPI #32](#) – Traffic Marking Paint, Solvent-Based** covers alkyd and solvent-based formulations. These products offer strong early water resistance and perform well in moderate abrasion conditions, making them a reliable choice in many climates.
- **[MPI #97](#) – Traffic Marking Paint, Water-Based/Latex** covers water-based formulations. Latex products have the advantage of longer glass bead retention, less cracking over time, and equivalent wear to alkyd systems with a lower environmental footprint.

Currently, MPI #32 and MPI #97 are Intended Use standards, meaning MPI reviews manufacturer-provided documentation with limited to no lab testing required. The Approved Product List (APL) currently lists 24 active products under MPI #32 and 32 active products under MPI #97.

These paint systems go beyond parking lines. They cover any systems used on asphalt and concrete walking and parking surfaces. Use them in high-traffic locations that need durable marking and graphics such as taxi and accessible areas, traffic lanes, parking spaces, airports, and shopping centers. They typically come in standard colors of yellow and white, and some manufacturers also offer blue, green, red, and black for specialized graphics or hiding old lines.

These coatings are typically applied at a high film thickness with a quick dry time. The minimum recommended dry film thickness for both MPI #32 and MPI #97 is 7 mils, and they can be made reflective by applying glass beads over the wet coating surface. Application is typically done by stripe-marking spray machines, spray-over-stencil, or

brush for smaller areas like curbs.

What's Next: Evolution Toward Performance Standards

As part of MPI's ongoing commitment to standards development, both traffic marking paint categories are under consideration for redevelopment into Detailed Performance Standards. This would mark a significant step forward in how these products are evaluated and specified.

Under a performance standard framework, listed products would be subject to more rigorous lab testing covering a range of criteria developed in alignment with existing MPI categories and Department of Transportation (DoT) regulations. Testing under consideration includes VOC content, color requirements, pigment content, viscosity for application, flashpoint, flexibility, and more.

These new standards would be developed jointly with specifiers and manufacturers to ensure they are performance-focused and achievable. The goal is to establish a common baseline that works for the majority of state DoTs and gives them a clear, consistent framework for specifying paint systems. It creates a way for manufacturers to submit products for testing to meet those needs. Depending on outcomes, climate or regional variants may also be explored.

This initiative reflects MPI's broader mission to provide state governments with clear, high-performance, and environmentally sound standards that align with MPI's federal standards. Aligned testing and standards helps reduce the cost of projects and makes purchasing and specifying more straightforward for everyone involved.

To get involved in the standards development process, or to learn more about getting your traffic marking paint tested and listed under MPI #32 or MPI #97, visit the [MPI Testing and Listing Program](#).