

# RackGuard Netting at L'Oreal

## NEW SHELF CONTAINMENT SYSTEM NETS IMPROVED CONFIDENCE FOR L'OREAL WAREHOUSE WORKERS

**Piscataway, NJ** - For some people, job safety is one of those back-of-the-mind things that hopefully jumps out at the right time to keep them out of danger. For others, like Donna Muniz, job safety is a way of life.

Donna's job is to keep employees working safely in the Piscataway production plant operated by the cosmetics giant, L'Oreal. But for Donna, being a Safety Health & Environmental Manager for L'Oreal is more than a job - it's a mission that follows her wherever she goes, every day.

Safety was at the top of Donna's mind after hearing of a tragic accident in a nearby automotive distribution facility. A forklift retrieving a pallet from a high shelf had inadvertently dislodged the pallet on the shelf behind it. The unseen pallet had fallen from its shelf, and struck a man working in the adjacent aisle. The injury was fatal.

As Donna said, "Can you imagine being the one that has to tell a family they lost a husband or father or son, because of an accident at work? I wouldn't want that job. I can't let that happen."



Donna's immediate reaction was to call a safety meeting with all the forklift drivers. She wanted them to know about the fatal accident that had occurred in their own neighborhood; to understand how the accident happened and recognize the importance of due caution in the warehouse.

But Donna also knew that the real key to preventing a tragedy was to make the warehouse environment as safe as possible. She researched several possible solutions for racking security systems and she began accepting quotations from prospective suppliers. None of the proposals she saw were completely satisfactory though, and the problem was still on her mind when she traveled to Florida to visit family. On a chance visit to The Home Depot there, she couldn't help but notice a heavy duty plastic netting that the store had installed behind its racks. The netting was visibly different from the systems she was considering, so Donna took the initiative to track the store staff who could tell her about it.

That inquiry led her to a Karen Slater, the Sales Manager for Industrial Netting of Minneapolis, MN. Industrial Netting specializes in producing industrial netting, mesh, and tubes for a wide range of applications offering specialty plastic meshes designed for uses as varied as filtration components to pest control to scrap metal containment. Most recently, the company had introduced its "RackGuard" product, specifically for the safe containment of warehoused goods.

RackGuard is an engineered thermoplastic net, or grid, made from high performance polymers to produce the high tensile strength and dimensional stability necessary to protect warehoused goods from falling. As an extruded mesh, RackGuard achieves a significant saving in material, compared to knotted netting, and can also be cut easily to any size.



After talking over the needs at L'Oreal, Slater referred Donna Muniz to Chip Merritt, Vice President Sales & Marketing at J & D Associates in Middletown, PA. J & D Associates is well known as a major designer, manufacturer and installer of motorized storage systems and related material handling products.

"One of Donna's concerns was to have a single vendor responsible for the complete project. We have worked with Chip and his people before, so we were very confident that J & D would be able to deliver the level service L'Oreal needed."

Merritt knew the RackGuard system well, his company had installed it in other warehouses and throughout major home improvement retailers locations. After some initial discussion, was quickly able to show Donna a unique approach to L'Oreal's safety concerns.

"Donna really wasn't happy with the choices she had seen so far," he recalls. "They were all based on traditional 8 x 10-ft. steel grids screwed flush to the back of the pallet racks. We discussed combining the RackGuard plastic mesh with steel pallet stops that, in effect, create a vertical rail system standing off 3 inches behind the shelves. The plastic mesh attaches to the pallet stops and, together, they offer a superior containment at a comparable cost."

With the RackGuard and stops recessed back from the racking, a conventional 48-inch pallet has room to balance evenly on standard 42-inch shelves. The stops prevent pallets from pushing material off the shelf in the row behind, while the RackGuard netting ensures that loose items can't fall into the next aisle or into the flue area between racks.

According to Chip Merritt, "This netting has a very attractive appearance compared to steel fencing or wire mesh. This can be especially important to a company like L'Oreal, that has a certain aesthetic image to maintain. What makes RackGuard even more attractive to most facilities, though, is how easily it keeps looking good!"

RackGuard's high-tensile strength polymer material is immune to dents and corrosion. It has exceptional dimensional stability, so it holds its shape well after absorbing impacts. The zip-tie connectors that attach RackGuard to J & D's pallet stops are as strong as the mesh itself, and help to distribute impact loads evenly. In comparison, the security provided by a steel grid is only as strong as the screws drilled into the racking.

As J & D has seen in other installations, the good look of RackGuard is more than skin deep. "Warehouse people all know how quickly steel security nets show their age," says Chip. "And we all know how costly repairing or replacing these grids can be over the life of the facility. If, for some reason, you do have to repair a tear in Rackguard netting or if you're moving your shelving around, all you need is a pair of shears and some zip ties! Ultimately, it's a huge saving in maintenance costs and downtime."



It's an important difference for the L'Oreal facility in Piscataway. With over 6000 lineal feet of 20-ft high racking, the L'Oreal warehouse is a large and extremely busy facility. And because the focus of the plant is production, not distribution, the warehouse is constantly challenged to keep up with maintenance needs with minimal downtime. "When production

needs the space," Donna says, "we have to keep it clear!"

"J & D was really good to work with," she continues. "One reason we chose them is that they do the complete job themselves, without subbing out to other contractors. They had complete control of the project. They understand the demands on a facility like ours and spent the time with our people to work around our production scheduling." Chip Merritt credits the system itself with some of the flexibility he can offer at installation. "Instead of handling bulky steel panels," he explains, "our stops are very compact and easy to manage. We can pre-cut the plastic netting to whatever size we need before we go in; we just tag it for the assemblers and ship it out in rolls."

After the installation was complete, the warehouse staff was still on Donna's mind. "After our meeting about the death in the other warehouse, you could see a difference in how they did their jobs. But now I can see their confidence in the facility is back. Our forklift operators say that loading and unloading pallets is a bit easier now. They tell me that they feel safer with the new containment system in place. And they feel like L'Oreal management really does care about their safety."

Industrial Netting was founded as InterNet, Inc. in 1981 and produces a wide range of plastic netting products for use in filtration, material handling, construction, aquaculture, agricultural, and industrial applications. The name was changed in October 2007 to more clearly reflect the company's mission.

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