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M&S: Making a Mark on Safety

A-Safe has been instrumental in ensuring that health and safety standards at Marks and Spencer's newest distribution centre are first rate, providing column and wall protectors at the state-of-the-art brand new build in Bradford.

In July this year, Marks and Spencer (M&S) officially opened its new flagship distribution centre in the new 90-acre Pro Logis Business Park on the busy M62 corridor. 250 days in construction and 1.1 million sq ft in size, the centre is the largest in the company's property portfolio and is also regarded as one of the biggest distribution centres in operation in the whole of the UK.

The site employs 1,200 and is the result of M&S consolidating its existing logistics network in the North of England. An operation of this size demands careful attention to its health and safety needs, with expensive equipment, large volumes of stock, warehouse vehicles and staff all moving and working around the site at the same time. The centre is a key part of the M&S supply chain and the need to be run efficiently yet safely is imperative.

With over 25 years experience in the plastic industry, A-Safe is well-placed to fully understand the need to ensure on-site health & safety measures should be fit for purpose and provide adequate protection to minimise the risk of accident. The true cost of accidents and on-site injuries can far outweigh the costs of prevention, with the Health & Safety Executive estimating that the cost of accidents could represent as much as 37% of profit, 6% of operating costs and 36 times the insured costs. As well as the financial implications of fines and compensation, there is also the damage to reputation and staff moral to take into account.



In conjunction with M&S, its construction team Winvic and Wincanton, who are responsible for running the operation, Halifax-based A-Safe was chosen to provide a selection of on-site safety barrier systems including over 60 column protectors along with wall protection. A-Safe demonstrated that its polymer-based barriers not only supplied significant advantages in its strength, durability and maintenance compared to other options, but was also a cost-effective solution for the company's needs. Significantly the logistics team at M&S also saw A-Safe's designs as fitting in with the modern, fresh and efficient image that the new Bradford distribution centre would convey.

When it came to the final decision, Danny Swann, Logistics Manager for Capital and Infrastructure at M&S Head Office, said: "I don't think either of the column protectors for Armco look great, therefore I prefer the A-Safe option."

He later added: "This solution [A-Safe] would become the Design Standard so I would want it in all new sheds and any we alter."

Importantly too, the polymer barriers offer a considerable environmental saving fitting with M&S's eco and ethical 'Plan A'. The building is carbon neutral and, in comparison to its competitors, A-Safe barrier systems are the greenest option, with a significantly reduced carbon footprint across its lifecycle from manufacture through to maintenance. Over a five-year period, a 100m length of plastic A-Safe barrier will create a carbon footprint four and a half times smaller than its steel 'Armco' equivalent.

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Protecting People



Property



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The new distribution centre is split into three parts. A-Safe has already completed installation of its barriers in zones A and B, which is responsible for the delivery of furniture and equipment (e.g. racking and shelving) to its store network. Zone C is yet to be utilised by M&S, with ambient food distribution to be introduced early next year.

A-Safe had already proved its credentials with M&S, helping to revolutionise its safety standards at other sites across its distribution network, including a trial at its central distribution centre in Stoke-on-Trent run by Norbert Dentressangle. Sections of pedestrian barrier and rack end barriers were installed at the site and have proved successful. Used to the traditional steel 'Armco' barriers, A-Safe's system with its advanced technology, design and manufacturing process using alternative materials with equivalent strength to steel offered significant benefits and advantages to M&S. Each system has been manufactured from special, highly visible coloured polymer that provides high-impact absorption with little or no damage to the barrier or the vehicle so maintenance and up-keep is minimal, if non-existent.

The success achieved at Stoke and other depots certainly helped to boost A-Safe's credentials with the logistics team at M&S. Particularly in view of the requirement to keep the new flagship distribution centre at Bradford looking clean, modern and efficient. A-Safe barriers fitted the bill perfectly with its highly visible solution that was low in maintenance, cost effective yet ultimately gave high levels of protection.

Recognising this factor, Danny Swann confirmed he wished to use A-Safe barriers across the new site, stating: "I also saw with my own eyes the installation A-Safe did at the Office depot in Ashton-under-Lyne. A few years on it still looks in good condition."

M&S Distribution Centre, Bradford – FAST FACTS

- You fit 12 WEMBLEY PITCHES inside
- It's a ONE MILE walk around the outside of the building
- There are 134 DOORS for lorries to access the loading bays
- 3,500 TONS OF STEEL were used in the building frames



For more information, contact the team at A-Safe on **01422 344402** or visit **www.asafe.com**
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