

# A Complete Guide to Warehouse Labeling and Signage

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## Getting Started

When it comes to labeling your warehouse, whether you are constructing a new facility or reconfiguring an existing one, there are many factors to consider. We'll review each step of the process from planning to production to installation and offer recommendations for working a label supplier. A good supplier should be a one-stop shop, with the capability to provide every type of label. Your supplier will be able to tell you which types of labels make sense for your space.

# Types of Warehouse Labels

**Warehouse LPN/Pallet Labels:** LPN (license plate numbers) are barcode labels that track inventory on moveable units, such as pallets, through your warehouse. These labels can be preprinted and provided by your supplier to ensure that sequential numbering is done correctly. They are available with adhesives that can survive various warehouse applications and temperatures.

**Rack/Beam Labels:** Rack labels help track and identify products for storage, picking, and inventory management in rack bay locations. They generally include a 1D or 2D barcode and human readable text. These labels should be durable and can include color coding. In facilities that use forklifts or cherry pickers to scan product, they are placed on each level of racking.

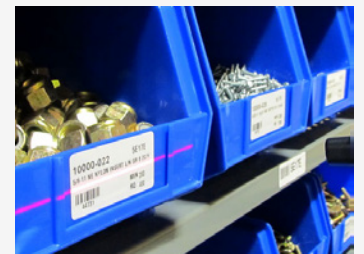
**Rack Upright/Totem Labels:** Totem labels serve the same function as rack labels but are created for facilities where workers remain on the ground while moving inventory out of rack bays. Placed at eye level, totem labels are color coded to represent different rack levels.

**Tote and Bin Labels:** For warehouses that store products or parts in bins or containers, bin labels identify their contents with a barcode. As bins and totes are mobile and reusable, it's a good idea to use placards before applying a barcode label so the label can eventually be removed easily.

**Floor Labels:** Floor labels have a variety of uses, from identifying rack and storage locations, to communicating safety instructions, to providing visual cues for boundaries within your warehouse. They need to be durable to stand up to foot and vehicle traffic.

**Overhead Signs:** A good option for bulk storage areas, aisle signs, and dock door signs, overhead signs typically contain a barcode and human readable text. They can be mounted on plastic or acrylic and hung from lines above their associated item.

**Warehouse Safety Signs:** An important part of keeping your operation running smoothly is properly placed warehouse safety signs and labels. These signs should be compliant with OSHA 1910 and any other regulation specific to your facility and can warn employees of potential hazards, direct forklift traffic, indicate exits and safety equipment, and more.



# Executing Your Warehouse Labeling Project

As you get started, set a timeline for your project to help plan certain tasks. Once you choose a label supplier, it's best to contact them 8-12 weeks before your desired completion date. Warehouse labeling projects generally happen in three phases – planning and estimating, design and production, and on-site installation.

## 1. Planning and Estimating

### Warehouse Survey

Your label supplier will start the planning phase with a warehouse survey. This can happen on-site at your facility or virtually with you filling out a survey document. The survey evaluates:

- Surfaces to be labeled
- Current condition of your racking system
- Environments in which labels will be used
- Average application temperatures, cold storage needs, and potential exposure to high temperatures
- Durability needs, including exposure to abrasion and cleaning chemicals

You will also need to provide your facility floor plan including measurements as well as a data file with your warehouse numbering scheme if you already have one.



### Proposal

After reviewing these materials, your label supplier will provide a comprehensive project proposal with product recommendations, cost estimates, production timeline, and installation and service recommendations.

As you evaluate the proposal, be sure to include all members of your team who will be involved in the project. Check with users to ensure they understand your numbering scheme and layout, start planning who will prep your facility for label installation, and delegate an on-site contact for installation day.

## 2. Design and Production

### Label Design Considerations

Once you agree on proposal terms with your label supplier, it's time to solidify your label and sign designs and prepare them for production. Depending on the size of your warehouse and steps in your operation, you should test label sizes and where you'll include human-readable text in addition to a barcode. Here are a few other things to consider in your designs:

**Numbering Schemes** – In planning your warehouse layout, you likely decided which fields would be used to organize your facility. From the largest to smallest, these fields include warehouse zone, aisle, rack bay, level/shelf, and position/slot. You'll need to decide whether your scheme will use numbers or letters for each of these fields.



For aisles and rack bays, it's a good idea to start with a number like "10" instead of "01" to allow for flexibility if your layout needs to change later. Levels or shelves are often identified by letters. And when positions or slots are being numbered, using two digits even when there are no more than nine positions (01, 02, 03...) allows the zero to act as a visual break and improves readability:

**Color** – An easy way to reduce scanning, slotting, and picking errors is to use color in your warehouse labels. For those with several levels of rack systems, it's common to have a certain color identify each tier. These colors can be used throughout your warehouse, in multiple distribution centers, and be incorporated into your WMS or inventory software to create a consistent company standard.

**1D and 2D Barcodes** – Many of the labels in your warehouse will include a barcode, and although traditional linear, or 1D, barcodes are common, 2D barcodes are becoming more popular. While 1D barcodes contain less than 100 characters, 2D barcodes can hold thousands and take up less space on a label. If you need your barcode to contain a lot of information (product name, date of arrival, date to be shipped, serial number, lot number, etc) 2D may be a good choice.

Depending on which label you choose, you'll also need to ensure your scanners are compatible. Laser scanners read 1D barcodes, and imaging scanners read both 1D and 2D in any direction.

### Next Steps

With your designs complete, the next step is to create a full data file with aisle, rack bay, level, and position numbering information. Your label supplier can provide guidelines for how to format the file based on your label designs.

After that, your label supplier goes to work creating your labels and signs. You can expect the production process to follow these steps:

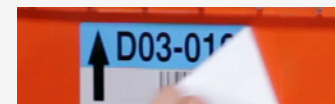
Provide proofs > Approve proofs > Production of labels > Confirm installation date and time > Ship installation materials and equipment > Ship final label and signage

Being responsive during this time goes a long way in keeping projects on schedule. You can set response times as part of a service level agreement to keep you and your supplier accountable.

### 3. On-site Installation

#### Why Use A Professional?

If you're considering a DIY approach to label and sign installation, it's important to consider the costs and benefits. You will receive the actual costs of using a professional when you receive your proposal, but keep in mind it typically takes warehouse teams 50% longer to complete an installation than a professional supplier.



Here are some of the benefits of using a professional:

- **Time** – A service agreement ensures your installation is completed on time and allows your workers to continue focusing on their job tasks
- **Correct Installation** – Labels and signs are put in the correct place, but also applied correctly as professionals know how to handle things like moisture and dusty racks
- **OSHA Certifications** – Professionals are certified to operate equipment like scissor lifts
- **Costs of Installation Materials** – Professionals often get better pricing when purchasing things like cabling for overheads signs or renting equipment



#### A Successful Installation

Whether your label supplier or your team is completing your warehouse label installation, there are some ways to prepare your warehouse to help things go more smoothly.

**Clean Racks** – Racks and beams should be clean before they are labeled. Dirt and dust, as well as residue from old labels will cause new labels to not stick as well.

**Equipment Access** – Understand what equipment will be used to reach upper-level racks and ensure it can get into your warehouse and fit in aisles.

**Power Availability** – Electric sources should be available for power lifts, booms, and other installation equipment. If they are not, portable generators should be rented.

**Facility Access** – Confirm what time of day your team or installation supplier will have access to the facility and where they should enter. If access is limited to evenings or weekends, this can impact staffing requirements and costs.





# Choosing a Label Supplier

With the number of steps and considerations required in the warehouse labeling process, it's clear that a reliable, reputable supplier should be a top priority. Levata has the resources to complete comprehensive warehouse site surveys, produce virtually any warehouse label or sign, and manage an installation onsite at your facility. Our team is made up of experienced sales professionals who know warehouses and labels and can provide recommendations to meet the unique needs of your facility. We also have an extensive professional services team and supplier network who regularly visit customers for walkthroughs and installs. Whether you have an existing warehouse that needs a label refresh or are planning to expand into multiple new distribution centers, our team can help you achieve efficiency with a complete label solution.

Contact Us Today for a Free Consultation!

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US (833) 353-8282  
CA (833) 975-7587  
UK +44 (0) 800 131 0150  
[www.levata.com](http://www.levata.com)