
HISTORY OF THE 3-PLY ACCESS MAT INDUSTRY IN CANADA

1998

The first access mats arrived in Fort Nelson, BC from Texas in mid 1998. They were nailed 2-ply mats and were shipped for Gulf Oil. By December they requested 3-ply mats to be manufactured for better strength, however these mats were still nailed.

2000

The first 'bolted' mat was manufactured in Silver Valley, AB in the early 2000s using 3/8" carriage bolts. These mats were 3-ply oak and other mixed hardwoods but manufactured with only 78 bolts. The format was more "square" than previous mats, because of improvements in manufacturing jigs.

2001

The number of bolts used during manufacturing in 2001 increased to 118. These mats were referred to as "The Super Mat". From 2000 to 2001, the loader fork rack/top clamp was designed and the rotating grapple for use on backhoes was added – these are still used in the lay down industry today.

2002

Additional 8' middle pieces were added to make a total of 18 middle pieces, designed to further strengthen the mat. The number of bolts used was increased to 136. Many mat manufacturers in North America followed suit and began to build "bolted" mats in 2003.

2005

By 2005 the largest user of mats in North America was EnCana - at the time it had over 60,000 mats. EnCana requested mats with 21 centre 8' pieces and 232 bolts – with three bolts per intersection down the outside 14' edge boards. This three-bolt pattern created a "swiss cheese" effect and caused many failures with the mats. The bolt count was cut back to 174, which remains the industry standard today.

2007

Canadian Fir mats were developed to replace the US built oak/mixed hardwoods mats. Fir mats became far more popular than the oak mats, especially since Fir mats are lighter than hardwood mats; saving more than 30 percent in trucking costs. The centre 8' layout was improved from an equal/random spacing, to a 7/7/7 format with only two gaps to enhance shear strength.

2013

Routing the outside edges of the bottom 14' board was introduced. This allowed for faster, easier, and safer handling with forks and helps to reduce the bottom board damage by 50 percent.

2014

Solid top access mats were introduced. These were manufactured specifically to meet the demand for "easy to clean" mats. The demand came largely from the Transmission Line industry and proved to dramatically reduce the risk of transporting noxious weeds and other contaminants. Additionally, these mats were 20 percent stronger than the standard open top mats.

2017

Rental and lay down services, complete with repair and mat washing facilities were becoming more popular. Many businesses will now provide this "total service" to customers that don't want to own or maintain access mat inventories.

2018

Many projects are demanding "total matting" over the entire job site or pipeline to protect ground cover and the environment.