# An Introduction to Safety signs and signals for You

Regulations: The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996

### Safety signs and signals

They are around us – at home, on roads, at footy stadiums, at work and so on.

They tell us what to do and not to do to look after our health and safety.

## At work, when an employer has to provide?

- 1. Where there is a significant risk to health and safety that has not been removed or controlled by other methods. Employers must ensure:
  - ✓ safety signs and signals are provided (or are in place),
  - ✓ maintained and
  - ✓ they are obeyed by people reading them, looking at them or hearing them.
- 2. When specified in law. e.g. fire safety signs; hazardous substances product labels, hand signals for hoisting and lifting.

# When it is appropriate?

3. Only where their use can further reduce the risk. – e.g. a sign ordering "do not enter"

#### It is not a substitute

4. For those situations where other methods of control will do it better – e.g. engineering, locks, gates, safety lids.

## **Determining requirements**

5. When doing risk assessments and or when specified and required by law.

# **Training employees**

6. Most signs are self-explanatory. Employers must ensure that their employees are aware of and understand the meaning of safety signs and signals. Be aware and cater for workers whose language of communication is not English.

# What is a safety sign?

7. It provides information or instruction about safety or health at work.

Figure 1: Safety sign colours and purpose



prohibition sign – a sign prohibiting behaviour likely to increase or cause danger (eg 'no access for unauthorised persons');



warning sign – a sign giving warning of a hazard or danger (eg 'danger: electricity');



mandatory sign – a sign prescribing specific behaviour (eg 'eye protection must be worn');



emergency escape or first-aid sign – a sign giving information on emergency exits, first aid, or rescue facilities (eg 'emergency exit/escape route';

Figure 2: Ways of providing signs and signals

Method	Pictograms	Purpose
Safety Colours	Red, Blue, <mark>Yellow</mark> ,	See Figure 1, above
	Orange, Green	
Sign Shape	Circle, triangle, circle	
	with a cross, diamond	
	and rectangle	
Symbols or pictograms	See Figure 1, above	See Figure 1, above
Illuminated sign		Make it visible and prominent. e.g. Fire
	R	exit signs, see figure 1 above
Acoustic signals	FIRE	Sound signal. e.g. fire alarms
Verbal communication		a predetermined spoken message
		communicated by a human or artificial
		voice. e.g. evacuate the building
		immediately
Hand signals	HOIST	a movement or position of the arms or
	1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1 1	hands giving a recognised signal. e.g. for
		crane lifting operations, directing an
	•	aeroplane to its parking slot.
Fire safety signs		What to do in case of a fire or fire alarm

Figure 3: examples of prohibition signs

Do not touch

No access for industrial vehicles

No access for unauthorised persons

Smoking and naked flames forbidden

No smoking

Respiratory equipment must be worn

Respiratory equipment must be worn

No access for pedestrians

Not drinkable

Do not extinguish with water

Safety helmet must be worn

Respiratory equipment must be worn

Safety boots must be worn

Face protection must be worn

Safety boots must be worn

Figure 4: Examples of mandatory signs

Figure 5: Examples of warning signs

Figure 6: Hazardous and dangerous substances



Figure 7: First aid signs

Figure 8: Firefighting signs







Safety shower



Stretcher

Emergency telephone for first aid or escape



Eyewash











Fire extinguisher



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