OBLIGATORY SAFETY SIGNS

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Introduction

This guidance booklet describes the safety signs and signals which must be used at all workplaces when hazards cannot be avoided or adequately reduced. These requirements are set out in the Safety, Health and Welfare at Work (Safety Signs) Regulations, 1995. These Regulations implement EC Directive 92/58/EEC which because of the increasing mobility of labour within the European Community, established a uniform system of signs and signals intended to be immediately understood by all whatever their linguistic backgrounds.

The system for signs and signal boards is based on the familiar “traffic light” colours – red for prohibition, yellow for caution, green for positive action. A fourth colour, blue, is used for mandatory signs and to convey information such as the location of a telephone. The shapes of the signs are also standardised: discs for prohibitions and instruction, triangles for warnings, squares and rectangles for emergency and informative signs.

The Regulations also have requirements governing signs on containers and pipes, on the identification and location of fire fighting equipment, signs for obstacles and dangerous locations and for governing marking traffic routes, illuminated and acoustic signs, verbal communications and loud signals. The Regulations should be checked for those details.

Employees must be provided with information and instruction on the meaning of safety signs and signals used and be consulted on the measures taken to comply with these Regulations.
1. General

1.1 The objective of the system of safety signs is to draw attention rapidly and unambiguously to objects and situations capable of causing specific hazards.

1.2 Under no circumstances is the system of safety signs a substitute for the requisite protective measures.

1.3 The system of safety signs may be used only to give information related to safety.

1.4 The effectiveness of the system of safety signs is dependent in particular on the provision of full and constantly repeated information to all persons likely to benefit therefrom.

2. Safety Colours and Contrasting Colours

2.1 Meaning of Safety Colours

--- TABLE 1 ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety Colour</th>
<th>Meaning or Purpose</th>
<th>Examples of Use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Stop Prohibition</td>
<td>Stop signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emergency shutdown devices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Prohibition signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>This colour is also used to identify fire-fighting equipment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Caution! Possible danger</td>
<td>Identification of dangers (fire, explosion, radiation, chemical hazards, etc.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Identification of steps, dangerous passages, obstacles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>No danger First aid</td>
<td>Identification of emergency routes and emergency exits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Safety showers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>First aid stations and rescue points</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue(1)</td>
<td>Mandatory signs Information</td>
<td>Obligation to wear individual safety equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Location of telephone</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Counts as a safety colour only when used in conjunction with a symbol or words on a mandatory sign or information sign bearing instructions relating to technical prevention.

2.2 Contrasting colours and symbol colours

--- TABLE 2 ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Safety Colour</th>
<th>Contrasting Colour</th>
<th>Symbol Colour</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Black</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>White</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

--- TABLE 3 ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Geometrical form</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>○</td>
<td>Mandatory and prohibition signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>△</td>
<td>Warning signs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>□</td>
<td>Emergency, information and additional signs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

--- TABLE 4 ---

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shape Colour</th>
<th>Shape</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Red</td>
<td>Prohibition</td>
<td>Fire-fighting equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yellow</td>
<td>Caution, possible danger</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Green</td>
<td>No danger</td>
<td>Rescue Equipment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue(1)</td>
<td>Mandatory</td>
<td>Information or instruction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Counts as a safety colour only when used in conjunction with a symbol or words on a mandatory sign or information sign bearing instructions relating to technical prevention.
PART A
- Flammable matter
- Explosive matter
- Toxic matter
- Corrosive matter
- Radioactive matter
- Beware, overhead load
- Beware, industrial trucks
- Danger, electricity
- General danger
- Laser beam

PART B
- Oxidant material
- Non-ionising radiation
- Strong magnetic field
- Obstacles
- Drop
- Biological risk
- Low temperature
- Harmful or irritant material
3 - MANDATORY SIGNS

PART A

Eye protection must be worn
Safety helmet must be worn
Ear protection must be worn
Respiratory equipment must be used
Safety boots must be worn
Safety gloves must be worn

PART B

Safety overalls must be worn
Face protection must be worn
Safety harness must be worn
Pedestrians must use this route

General mandatory sign
(to be accompanied where necessary by another sign)
6. Design of Safety Signs

6.1 Prohibition Signs.
Background: white – Symbol or Wording: black. The safety colour red must appear around the edge and in a transverse bar and must cover at least 35% of the surface of the sign.

6.2 Warning, mandatory, emergency and information signs.
Background: safety colour – Symbol or Wording: contrasting colour. A yellow triangle must have a black edge. The safety colour must cover at least 50% of the surface of the sign.

6.3 Additional signs.
Background: white – Wording: black
or
Background: safety colour – Wording: contrasting colour.

6.4 Symbols.
The design must be as simple as possible and details not comprehension must be left out.
Identification of permanent risk locations such as:

- locations where there is a risk of collision, falling, stumbling or of falling loads.
- steps, holes in floors etc.