

Guidance

- (c) **safety colour** – a colour to which a specific meaning is assigned (eg yellow means ‘be careful’ or ‘take precautions’);
- (d) **symbol or pictogram** – these appear in Schedule 1, although some variation in detail is acceptable provided the meaning is the same. They are for use on a signboard or illuminated sign (eg the trefoil ionising radiation warning sign);
- (e) **illuminated sign** – a sign made of transparent or translucent materials which is illuminated from the inside or the rear to give the appearance of a luminous surface (eg many emergency exit signs);
- (f) **acoustic signal** – a sound signal which is transmitted without the use of a human or artificial voice (eg fire alarm);
- (g) **verbal communication** – a predetermined spoken message communicated by a human or artificial voice;
- (h) **hand signal** – a movement or position of the arms or hands giving a recognised signal and guiding persons who are carrying out manoeuvres which are a hazard or danger to people;
- (i) **fire safety sign** – see paragraph 88.

Where and to whom do these Regulations apply? (regulation 4)

Employers/employees

17 The Regulations place duties on employers in respect of risks to their employees. As explained in paragraphs 10–13, the principal duty is to ensure that safety signs are in place.

18 In some industries, for example offshore, many employees are employed by contractors who are not in control of the places in which their employees work. In practice, safety signs will normally be provided by the employer or person in charge of the workplace, usually the owner or operator of the installation. The Management Regulations are relevant in these cases, particularly regulation 12. This requires the ‘host’ employer (or self-employed person) to give information on risks and the associated precautions arising from that employer’s activities to the employer of persons at work there. In these cases the employer or contractor will usually be able to meet their obligations by relying on the arrangements made by the host (ie the owner or operator).

19 Contractors who are also employers will want to check that their employees are familiar with the meaning of safety signs likely to be encountered during the course of their work. They may also wish to make checks where there is a ‘host’ employer that appropriate signs are in place.

Non-employees

20 These Regulations do not place any duty on employers to provide signs to warn other people (eg visitors, neighbours) of risks to their health and safety. They do not apply to the self-employed. However in both these cases employers or the self-employed will still have duties under section 3* of the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (the HSW Act) and regulation 12 of the Management Regulations (see paragraph 18) regarding the health and safety of non-employees, and may find the safety signs described here helpful in meeting these general duties.

* Section 3 of the HSW Act requires both employers and the self-employed to ensure so far as is reasonably practicable the health and safety of others who are not their employees and who may be affected by their work activity.

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Supply of articles and dangerous substances (regulation 3(1)(a))

21 The Regulations have no requirements regarding the supply of either articles or dangerous substances. The labelling of these products is subject to separate legislation. For example the supply of chemicals is covered by the current edition of the Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations (CHIP)* ('carriage' of dangerous substances is referred to in paragraph 44). Most machinery will be subject to the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 (as amended)† which also contain marking requirements (supporting European standards provide ways of meeting these requirements).

Internal works traffic (regulations 3(1)(c) and 4(6))

22 The signs specified in Schedule 1 of the Regulations (reproduced in paragraph 42 of this guidance) are not intended for use in directing traffic on public roads, waterways etc. However, the Regulations require the use of road traffic signs, as prescribed in the Road Traffic Regulation Act 1984 (examples of which are shown in the Department for Transport publications *Know your traffic signs*⁶ and *Highway code*⁷) to regulate road traffic within workplaces where necessary.

Application to merchant shipping (regulation 3(1)(d))

23 Seagoing ships are subject to separate merchant shipping legislation, administered by the Department for Transport. Regulation 3(1)(d) disapplies the Regulations from ships in respect of the normal shipboard activities of a ship's crew under the direction of the master. It does not, however, disapply them in respect of other work activities. For example, where a shore-based contractor goes on board to carry out work on the ship, that person's activities will be subject to the Regulations within territorial waters. In these cases the contractor may need to make similar checks to those described in paragraph 19 to ensure, for example, that appropriate signs are in place. This partial exemption applies to seagoing ships only. The Regulations apply in full to ships operating on inland waters. The Regulations also apply to offshore installations including those which are registered as ships (see paragraph 24).

Application offshore (regulations 3(2)(b) and 4(4))

24 The Regulations apply to work activities carried out in British territorial waters and in designated areas of the UK Continental Shelf. The activities are those listed in the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 (Application outside Great Britain) Order 2001. This includes offshore installations, wells, pipeline works and activities connected with installations and wells such as construction, loading and unloading of supply vessels, and diving operations offshore. Note that for offshore installations the emergency warning arrangements including the tones of acoustic signals and colours of illuminated signs are covered in the Offshore Installations (Prevention of Fire and Explosion, and Emergency Response) Regulations 1995.

* The Chemicals (Hazard Information and Packaging for Supply) Regulations 2002 (CHIP), which include requirements on suppliers and consignors of chemicals to: classify chemicals; label and package them safely; and provide safety data sheets for dangerous chemicals.

† The Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 1992 (as amended) implement in the UK the Machinery Directive and its amending Directives. The purpose of these Directives is to remove barriers to trade for machinery within the scope. The amended Regulations place duties on manufacturers, importers and suppliers etc of machinery. They will be revoked and replaced when the Supply of Machinery (Safety) Regulations 2008 SI 2008/1597 come into force on 29 December 2009.

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Fire safety (regulations 4(3) and 6)

25 The way these Regulations apply with respect to fire safety signs (eg fire exit signs and fire alarms) is described in Part 3.

PART 2 USING SAFETY SIGNS

Using safety signs effectively (Part 1 of Schedule 1)

26 This part aims to help employers with their duties to select, make effective use of, and maintain safety signs. The technical requirements of the Regulations relating to the various types of safety signs are explained.

General rules on use

27 The signs shown in Schedule 1 of the Regulations are to be used when it is necessary to convey the relevant message or information specified in the Regulations (but see paragraph 20).

28 If the hearing or sight of any employee is impaired for any reason, for example, by wearing personal protective equipment, additional measures may need to be taken to ensure that employees can see or hear the warning sign or signal, for example by increasing the brilliance or volume.

29 In some cases more than one type of safety sign may be necessary, for example, an illuminated warning sign indicating a specific risk combined with an acoustic alarm meaning 'general danger' to alert people, or hand signals combined with verbal instructions.

Maintenance

30 All safety signs need to be properly maintained so that they are capable of performing the function for which they are intended. This can range from the routine cleaning of signboards to regular checks of illuminated signs and acoustic signals to see that they work properly.

31 A guaranteed supply of power or back-up in the event of failure may be necessary for safety signs and signals which require some form of power to enable them to operate (unless the hazard is itself eliminated by the power failure).

Safety colours

32 In these Regulations signs incorporating certain colours have specific meanings. Table 1 identifies the colours for safety signs generally (for fire safety signs, see paragraph 90).

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Table 1 Safety sign colours (excluding fire safety signs)

Colour	Meaning or purpose	Instruction and information
Red	Prohibition sign Danger alarm	Dangerous behaviour; stop; shut-down; emergency cut-out devices, evacuate
Yellow or Amber	Warning sign	Be careful; take precautions; examine
Blue	Mandatory sign	Specific behaviour or action, eg wear protective equipment
Green	Emergency escape First-aid sign	Doors; exits; escape routes; equipment and facilities
	No danger	Return to normal

Using signboards

33 Where signboards are used in a workplace ensure that they are sufficiently large and clear so that they can be easily seen and understood. For example, the stretcher sign needs to show clearly where the equipment is. In conditions of poor natural light it may be necessary to provide either artificial illumination or signboards made of reflective material, or both (see also paragraph 100). Signboards also need to be durable, securely fastened and properly maintained (eg washed or resurfaced) to ensure they remain visible.

34 Permanent signboards are necessary, except in cases where the workplace or hazard is temporary. Even in these cases safety signs still need to be consistent with the requirements of the Regulations. For example, use of a portable warning sign by cleaners may be necessary if a hazard such as a slippery floor exists for a short period.

35 **Take care to avoid using too many signboards in close proximity.** Signboards are only effective if they can be seen and understood. If too many signs (including information signs) are placed together there is a danger of confusion or of important information being overlooked.

36 If circumstances change, making a particular signboard unnecessary (ie if the hazard no longer exists), it is important to ensure its removal so that misleading information is not displayed.

Pictograms

37 **Small differences from the pictograms or symbols shown in Schedule 1 of the Regulations are acceptable**, providing they do not affect or confuse the message that the sign conveys.

38 If Schedule 1 of the Regulations does not contain a suitable signboard (see pages 13–19) then it is acceptable to design your own, providing it conforms to the general principles described in the Regulations.

39 Pictograms used in signs need to be as simple as possible containing only necessary detail.

40 It may sometimes be useful to supplement a safety sign with text to aid understanding. This may be important, for example when introducing a new or unfamiliar sign, or using a general danger or warning sign. In these cases the meaning is reinforced if the background colour of the supplementary sign is the

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same as the colour used on the safety sign it is supplementing.

41 Any supplementary sign or text used with a particular safety sign needs to be chosen to reflect the same safety sign category. So, for example if a mandatory sign is used, ensure that accompanying text (if any) describes the mandatory nature of the action to be taken such as 'face protection must be worn'.

Signboards appearing in Schedule 1

42 The intrinsic features of the four types of signboards referred to in Table 1, and also fire safety signs (see paragraph 90) are described below. An example of each sign appearing in Schedule 1 is also included.

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Prohibitory signs

Intrinsic features:

- (a) round shape;
- (b) black pictogram on white background, red edging and diagonal line (the red part to take up at least 35% of the area of the sign).



No smoking



Smoking and naked
flames forbidden



No access for
pedestrians



Do not extinguish with
water



Not drinkable



No access for
unauthorised persons



No access for
industrial vehicles



Do not touch

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Warning signs

Intrinsic features:

- (a) triangular shape;
- (b) black pictogram on a yellow background with black edging (the yellow part to take up at least 50% of the area of the sign).



Flammable material or high temperature*



Explosive material



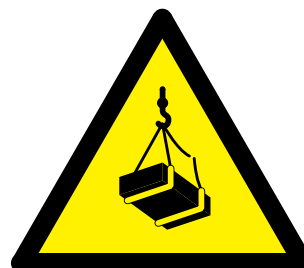
Toxic material



Corrosive material



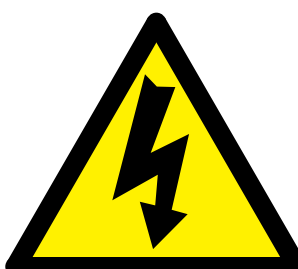
Radioactive material



Overhead load



Industrial vehicles



Danger: electricity



General danger

* In the absence of a specific sign for high temperature.

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Laser beam



Oxidant material



Non-ionising radiation



Strong magnetic field



Obstacles



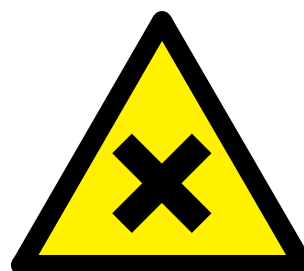
Drop



Biological risk*



Low temperature



**Harmful or irritant
material†**

* Pictogram laid down in council Directive 90/679/EEC of 26 November 1990 on the protection of workers from the risks related to exposure to biological agents at work (Seventh individual Directive within the meaning of Article 16(1) of Directive 89/391/EEC) OJ No L374, 31.12.1990, p.1.

† The background to this sign may exceptionally be amber if justified to differentiate it from a similar road safety sign.