



University of  
St Andrews

## Guidance on safety signs and signals

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# Safety Signs and Signals


## Introduction


To ensure that signs and signals employed within the University are easily understood it is important that they conform to the relevant standards set by the following legislation.


## Legal requirements



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

- (1). Safety signs should be provided and maintained where the risks to health and safety cannot be avoided by other means or there is a residual risk present even with other control measures in place;
- (2). Appropriate instruction, information and training in the use and understanding of safety signs should be provided to all employees;
- (3). An appropriate type of sign board using pictograms conforming to the standard given in the legislation should, where necessary, be put up. These standards are

- **Prohibition sign**  - Circle with a red outer rim and white background with a red line through a black pictogram means the item depicted in the pictogram is absolutely prohibited e.g. if the pictogram is a cigarette then Smoking is prohibited;

- **Warning sign** -  This is a triangle with a black edge and a yellow background with a black pictogram indicating what the hazard is e.g. if the pictogram is a skull and cross bones, then there is a toxic chemical hazard present;

- **Mandatory sign** -  This is a circle with a white edge and a blue background and a white pictogram and indicates that the item indicated by the pictogram must be performed e.g. if the pictogram is a face with ear defenders then ear protection must be worn at all times in this area;

- **Escape or first-aid sign** -  or  This a square or rectangular sign with a white edge and green background and a white pictogram. If it is an emergency exit sign it will show a white running man with an arrow showing the direction of the emergency exit. If it is a First-Aid sign it will have a white cross in the centre of the green background;



- **Fire-fighting signs** - This are square or rectangular signs with a white edge and red background with a white pictogram which indicates the type of fire fighting equipment at this location.

- **Fire Door signs** - To avoid external blockage of final exit fire doors, these should have the



sign . All internal fire doors should also have the following



- sign fixed to the door: to remind staff not to wedge open such fire doors.

- (4). Text may be added to the safety sign to help with the understanding of the sign;
- (5). Safety signs should be placed in an appropriate place;
- (6). All containers and pipes should have appropriate labels attached to them if they contain a hazardous material. The signs should indicate what the hazards are and other relevant information. The signs for use in pipelines should conform to British Standard BS 1710 (Specification for Identification of Pipelines and Services);
- (7). All obstacles should be clearly marked with yellow and black striped (or red and white stripes) tape;
- (8). All alternative emergency exits must be identified and appropriate signs installed;
- (9). All new fire extinguishers should be marked according to the BS EN 3 standard which is a red body with the option of coloured markings identifying the type of fire extinguisher e.g. black for CO2 extinguisher, blue for powder extinguisher etc.
- (10). The position of all fire fighting equipment should be identified using appropriate signs;
- (11). Fire alarms should be audible above the general background noise in the workplace. All members of staff and students should know what the fire alarm sounds like.

### **Action by Schools and Units**

Safety signs should only be posted where a risk assessment has identified there is a significant risk to the health of workers or to the environment. Signs should be:

- Used sparingly and should identify the major risk.
- Avoid the use of multiple signs as this often leads to confusion and makes it difficult to identify the most serious risk.

- Avoid contradictory signs which appear to require people to do the opposite of what is required. This is often seen when mandatory and prohibition signs are used incorrectly.

Some signs can be used for temporary work for example when a floor is being cleaned, the following should be used:



Or used for identifying the equipment is locked off for maintenance eg.



Most signs however should be permanently fixed in position. Before the sign is fixed in position, you should ensure:

- An assessment of all risks has been performed and that where necessary appropriate signs are put up. It is the responsibility of the School/Unit to provide the appropriate sign. **Note: Where the sign is a building requirement e.g. emergency exit signs, the University will provide the signs;**
- All signs are maintained in good condition and replaced when unreadable;
- All signs should be easily visible to all staff and students (this includes those with disabilities)
- The actions required by mandatory and prohibition signs are implemented and enforced;
- All pipework containing hazardous substances are appropriately marked e.g. by fixing appropriate labels at sampling and discharge points;
- Appropriate instruction, information and training is provided to staff;
- All alternative emergency exits have been clearly identified and appropriate signs put up. Where there is inadequate signage, the Head of the School/Unit should contact Estates and Buildings on this matter;
- The position of all fire extinguishers is identified using appropriate signs;

- All members of staff and students are made aware of what the local fire alarm sounds like.

## **Signage and Signals for Disabled Persons**

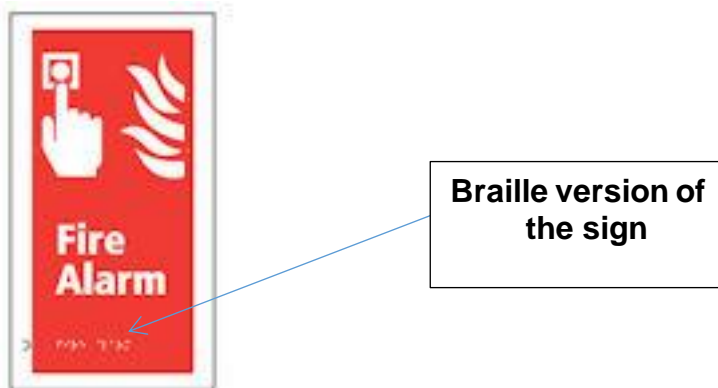
The signage and signals used will have to vary for those with impairments such that the signs or signals were easily understood by the person with the disability. This will require an assessment of the type and degree of impairment suffered by the person as well as the buildings that the person proposes to use. This should be done as part of the Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans (PEEPs) set up for people with such impairments. The modifications are easy enough to do but can only be done if the person notifies the Director of EHSS first.

### ***Hearing Impairments***

Where there are people with severe hearing impairments then the fire alarm is likely not be heard when activated. In such situations, the fire alarm should be linked to a flashing red light. This is most important for areas where such staff or students could be by themselves eg toilets, single study rooms etc

### ***Visual Impairments***

If there will be staff or students with a significant sight impairment, then it maybe necessary to get Braille coded signs for example:



It is however very important that if Braille signs are posted, then they must be at arm height so that a person with eyesight impairments can read the signs

It is important that fire action notices are in Braille in public access buildings as there is a high chance of a member of the public attending an event who has severe eyesight impairments. Thus if the fire alarm is activated, they will need to know what to do.

### ***Mobility Impairments***

The Fire Exit signage will identify then quickest way out of a building for an able bodies person. It is therefore vital that if there is a person with a mobility impairment then appropriate signage must show the safest route either out of the building in a wheelchair or if above ground floor, then the safest route to a refuge where they can then be evacuated

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