



Weekly Safety Meeting

Warning: Read the Signs

Safety signs are too important to be ignored. They provide us with vital hazard information in several ways: through colors, words, and pictures. Signs tell you where the hazards are and how to protect against the danger. Safety signs come in all sizes, colors, and shapes. Knowing what these signs mean and following their instructions is a key to safety.

Many accidents occur simply because a worker failed to pay attention to an obvious warning sign. Others are injured because someone forgets to post a sign. A simple, commonsense approach to warning signs can prevent many accidents.

OSHA defines signs as “the warning of a hazard, temporarily or permanently affixed or placed at locations where hazards exist.” Danger signs must only be used where an immediate hazard exists. OSHA specifies their appearance.

It is dangerous to ignore workplace safety signs. These messages are in place to prevent accidents and injuries. They alert employees to potential hazards in the workplace.

Let’s consider a few of the more common of these, their colors, and what the colors symbolize.

Safety Signs:

- **Red** stands for danger. It identifies immediate hazards that will cause serious injury or death. Red also indicates the location of fire equipment and emergency exits.
- **Orange** means warning. Orange signs point to hazards that could cause serious injury or even death if you fail to take safety precautions. Examples: “**Warning: Construction Area**” or “**Warning Biohazard.**”
- **Yellow** signals caution. Yellow is linked to physical hazards that could cause minor or moderate injury. It’s often used to mark hazards that could cause someone to slip, trip, or fall. Other examples: “**Caution: Forklift Traffic. Keep Clear**” or “**Caution: Keep Hands Clear.**”
- **Green** indicates the location of safety equipment, such as eyewash stations, emergency showers, and first-aid kits.
- **Blue** signifies general information, such as notices about safety rules and procedures. For example, “**Notice: Keep Area Clean.**”
- Black and white are used to give instructions for housekeeping or to mark boundaries such as traffic aisles, stairways, and directional signs.

- Special signs are used just for biological hazards and radiation hazards. The biological hazard (biohazard) sign is florescent orange or orange red with letters or symbols in a contrasting color.
- The biohazard sign alerts us to the presence or potential presence of blood or other biological hazards.
 - Radiation hazards are identified with a sign bearing the familiar three-bladed radiation symbol in black or magenta or red on a yellow background.

Signs can be three-dimensional shapes instead of flat. Bright-colored cone shapes warn that the floor is uneven. When the danger is from fire and smoke, or the power is off, fluorescent tape stripes on a floor can guide you outside.

For signs to be effective, the graphics must be understandable, and words must be easy to read with good contrast between background and lettering. They must also be the language of those who are expected to read them, leading many workplaces to use multi-lingual signs. They need to be placed at the eye level of the people who need to see them, whether walking or driving past.

Signs should also be maintained so they are accurate and easy to read. Dirt, poor lighting, or placement of materials can obscure signs. Placement is important so it is clear where the hazards is and what arrows are pointing to.

Safety signs warn us of hazards that we might not already know about. Reading and heeding all signs is vital to your continued safety and the safety of others. And remember, things change around here. Just because there was no sign yesterday, does not mean there won't be one today. New materials can be introduced into the work area.

Remember:

Unfortunately, safety documentation is filled with stories about people who were seriously injured because they failed to observe workplace safety signage. It may be up to your employer to make sure signs are in place, but it is up to you to read and obey them! Not doing so can have serious consequences.

Keep alert. Keep your eyes open and pay attention to all warnings.

AVOID MOURNING...ACKNOWLEDGE A WARNING!

