



**INLAND
WATERWAYS**
ASSOCIATION

GUIDANCE NOTE

*Safety Signs &
Signals*



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First published as v.1 in 2022. This is a web-friendly document and will be reviewed and updated when the source legislation changes. Any printed version may not be the latest version and a check should be made on IWA website. IWA has interpreted the current legislation, as dated in the document, in good faith but the reader should check for themselves that it is the latest version and that they are acting within the legal framework.

INTRODUCTION

Safety signs should be used to reduce risk where other control methods are not sufficient on their own. Signs are not a substitute for other controls. Other means of communicating health and safety instructions on site includes hand signals, acoustic signals and verbal communications, such as pre-recorded evacuation messages.

Volunteers need to be aware of and understand the meaning of safety signs and signals either seen or heard during their work. In some instances it is a legal requirement to display certain notices.



THE HEALTH & SAFETY (SIGNS & SIGNALS) REGULATIONS (1996)

The regulations require that safety signs are provided and maintained where there is a significant risk to health and safety that has not been removed by other control measures and is only appropriate where the signs should help to reduce the risk.

When and where safety signs are needed will be determined by the risk assessment carried out under the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations. The signs will be used where there is a significant residual risk once other control measures have been put in place. Certain fire safety signs need to be displayed in all circumstances under separate legal provisions.



The regulations are about providing information or instruction about safety or health at work using a signboard, a colour, an illuminated sign, acoustic signal, a verbal communication or hand signal.

The regulations cover various ways of communicating health and safety information and the following terms are used:

- ① **Safety and /or health:** providing information or instruction about safety or health at work using a signboard, a colour, an illuminated sign or acoustic signal, a verbal communication or hand signal.
- ② **Signboard:** a sign which provides information or instructions by a combination of shape, colour and a symbol or pictogram.
- ③ **Prohibition sign:** prohibiting behaviour likely to increase or cause danger.
- ④ **Warning sign:** giving warning of a hazard or danger.
- ⑤ **Mandatory sign:** prescribing a particular behaviour.
- ⑥ **Emergency escape or first-aid sign:** giving information on emergency exits, first-aid or rescue facilities.
- ⑦ **Safety colour:** colour to which a specific meaning is assigned.
- ⑧ **Symbol or pictogram:** for use on a sign board or illuminated sign, and are shown in schedule 1 of the regulations.
- ⑨ **Illuminated sign:** sign made of transparent or translucent material and illuminated from inside or the rear.

- ⑩ **Acoustic sign:** sound signal transmitted without the use of human or artificial voice.
- ⑪ **Verbal communication:** predetermined spoken message given by human or artificial voice.
- ⑫ **Hand signal:** recognised signal using the position or movement of the arms or hands to guide people who are carrying out manoeuvres.
- ⑬ **Fire safety sign:** a sign (illuminated sign or acoustic sign) providing information on escape routes or emergency exits in case of fire, information on fire-fighting equipment and warning of a fire.



Colour	Meaning or purpose	Instructions & information
Red	Prohibited sign, danger alarm, fire-fighting equipment.	Dangerous behaviour. Stop, shutdown, emergency cut out devices, evacuate. Identification and location.
Yellow/amber	Warning sign.	Be careful, take precautions examine.
Blue	Mandatory sign.	Specific behaviour. Wear protective equipment.
Green	Emergency escape, first aid. No danger.	Doors, exits, routes, equipment, facilities. Return to normal.

SIGNBOARDS (FROM SCHEDULE 1 OF THE REGULATIONS)

Taken from Health and Safety Executive (HSE) guidance L64.

PROHIBITION SIGNS

Round shape, black pictogram on a white background, red edging and diagonal line.



No access for unauthorised persons



Smoking and naked flames forbidden



No access for pedestrians



Not drinkable



No access for industrial vehicles



Do not touch



No smoking



Do not extinguish

WARNING SIGNS

Triangular shape, black pictogram on a yellow background with black edging.



Flammable material or high temperature



Explosive material



Toxic material



Corrosive material



Radioactive material



Overhead load



Industrial vehicles



Danger electricity



General danger



Laser beam



Oxidant material



Non-ionising radiation



Strong magnetic field



Obstacles



Drop



Biological risk



Low temperature

This sign has been deleted from the list by the UK CLP Regulations and should not be used.

Harmful or irritant material

MANDATORY SIGNS

Round shape, white pictogram on a blue background.



Eye protection must be worn



Safety helmet must be worn



Ear protection must be worn



Respiratory equipment must be worn



Safety boots must be worn



Safety gloves must be worn



Safety harness must be worn



Face protection must be worn



Safety overalls must be worn



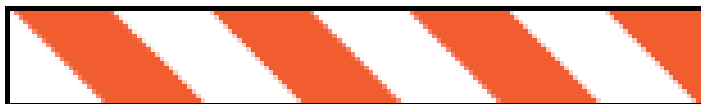
Pedestrian must use this route



General mandatory sign (to be accompanied where necessary by another sign)

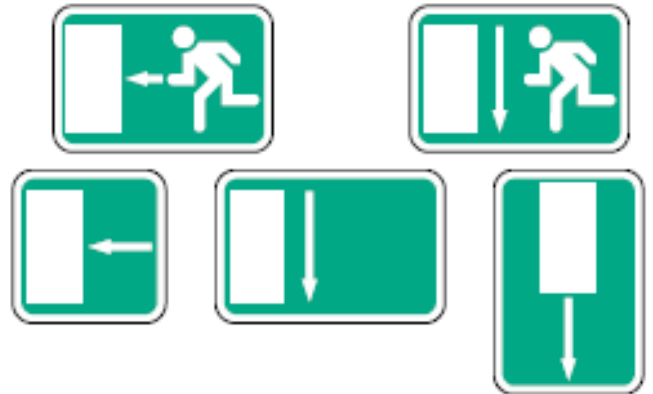
SIGNS FOR MARKING OBSTACLES AND DANGEROUS LOCATIONS

Can be yellow and black or red and white diagonal stripes.



EMERGENCY ESCAPE OR FIRST-AID SIGNS

Rectangular or square shape, white pictogram on a green background.



Examples of BS EN ISO 7010



Supplementary 'This way' signs for emergency exits/escape routes



First aid signs



First aid poster



Stretcher



Eyewash



Safety shower



Emergency telephone for first aid or escape

FIRE – FIGHTING SIGNS

Rectangular or square shape, white pictogram on a red background.



Fire hose



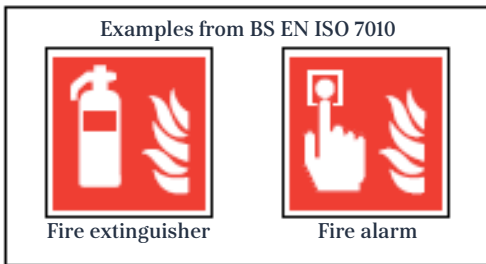
Fire extinguisher



Ladder



Emergency fire telephone



Fire extinguisher

Fire alarm

Supplementary ‘This way’ signs for firefighting equipment



WARNING SIGNS – CHEMICAL LABELLING AND PACKAGING

Not in schedule 1, but laid down in annex V to the Classification, Labelling and Packaging of Substances Regulation, known as CLP) diamond shape, black pictogram on white background with red edging.



Gas under pressure



Explosive



Oxidising



Flammable



Corrosive



Health hazard



Extreme toxicity






Serious health hazard



Harmful to the environment

CODED HAND SIGNALS

Meaning	Description	Illustration
General signals		
<p>START Attention, start of command</p>	<p>Both arms are extended horizontally with the palms facing forwards</p>	 <p>START</p>
<p>STOP Interruption End of movement</p>	<p>The right arm points upwards with the palm facing forwards</p>	 <p>STOP</p>
<p>END of the operation</p>	<p>Both hands are clasped at chest height</p>	 <p>END</p>



Vertical movements

RAISE
 The right arm points upwards with the palm facing forward and slowly makes a circle



LOWER
 The right arm points downwards with the palm facing inwards and slowly makes a circle



VERTICAL DISTANCE
 The hands indicate the relevant distance



Horizontal movements




<p>MOVE FORWARDS</p>	<p>Both arms are bent with the palms facing upwards, and the forearms make slow movements towards the body</p>	
<p>MOVE BACKWARDS</p>	<p>Both arms are bent with the palms facing downwards, and the forearms make slow movements away from the body</p>	
<p>RIGHT to the signalman's</p>	<p>The right arm is extended more or less horizontally with the palm facing downwards and slowly makes small movements to the right</p>	
<p>LEFT to the signalman's</p>	<p>The left arm is extended more or less horizontally with the palm facing downwards and slowly makes small movements to the left</p>	



<p>HORIZONTAL DISTANCE</p>	<p>The hands indicate the relevant distance</p>	
<p>Danger</p>		
<p>DANGER Emergency stop</p>	<p>Both arms point upwards with the palms facing forwards</p>	
<p>QUICK</p>	<p>All movements faster</p>	
<p>SLOW</p>	<p>All movements slower</p>	

i There is a voluntary code of hand signals when an excavator is used as a crane. A link is provided in useful resources on p.14.

COLOUR CODING OF FIRE EXTINGUISHERS

Extinguishing medium	Water: for wood, textile and solid material fires	Foam: for liquid fires	Powder: for liquid and electrical fires Specialist dry powder: for metal fires	Carbon dioxide: for wood, paper, textiles, liquid and electrical fires	Wet chemical: for wood, paper, textile, cooking oil and solid material fires
Colour of panel	Red 	Cream 	Blue 	Black 	Yellow 
Where not to use	Do not use on liquid, electrical or metal fires	Do not use on electrical or metal fires	Note: check for M28 or L2 text printed on extinguisher to confirm that it is suitable for metal fires	Do not use on metal fires	Do not use on liquid, gas or electrical fires

GUIDANCE NOTE

USEFUL RESOURCES:

The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations

HSE guidance: Safety Signs and Signals, L64

Voluntary code of practice for hand signals when an excavator is used as a crane

Sign up to read the full Practical Restoration Handbook and supporting resources here:
waterways.org.uk/practicalrestorationhandbook





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