

## Accident Prevention Signs and Tags

### **Description:**

The standard and its specifications apply to the design, application, and use of signs, tags, or symbols intended to indicate and, insofar as possible, to define specific hazards of a nature such that failure to designate them may lead to accidental injury to workers or the public, or both, or to property damage. These specifications are intended to cover all safety signs except those designed for streets, highways, railroads, and marine regulations. They do not apply to bulletin boards or safety posters.

### **Regulatory Reference**

§ 1910.145 Specifications for accident prevention signs and tags.

### **Applies to:**

Workplaces where identifiable hazards exist, especially to shops, warehouse, construction, and bulk plant areas.

### **General Requirements:**

#### A. Signs

1. Danger signs are used to warn of specific dangers or hazards, and must be uniform throughout the workplace where used. All employees shall be instructed that danger signs indicate immediate danger and that special precautions are necessary. The colors red, black, and white shall be those of opaque glossy samples as specified in Table 1 of Fundamental Specification of Safety Colors for CIE Standard Source "C", American National Standard Z53.1-1967, which is incorporated by reference as specified in §1910.6.
2. Caution signs shall be used only to warn against potential hazards or to caution against unsafe practices. All employees shall be instructed that caution signs indicate a possible hazard against which proper precaution should be taken. Standard color of the background shall be yellow; and the panel, black with yellow letters. Any letters used against the yellow background shall be black. The colors shall be those of opaque glossy samples as specified in Table 1 of American National Standard Z53.1-1967.
3. Safety instruction signs shall be used where there is a need for general instructions and suggestions relative to safety measures. Standard color of the background shall be white; and the panel, green with white letters. Any letters used against the white background shall be black. The colors shall be those of opaque glossy samples as specified in Table 1 of American National Standard, Z53.1-1967.
4. Nature of wording. The wording of any sign should be easily read and concise. The sign should contain sufficient information to be easily understood. The wording should make a positive, rather than negative suggestion and should be accurate in fact.

## B. Tags

1. Accident prevention tags are used to identify hazardous conditions and provide a message to employees with respect to hazardous conditions.
2. Use. Tags shall be used as a means to prevent accidental injury or illness to employees who are exposed to hazardous or potentially hazardous conditions, equipment or operations which are out of the ordinary, unexpected or not readily apparent. Tags shall be used until such time as the identified hazard is eliminated or the hazardous operation is completed. Tags need not be used where signs, guarding or other positive means of protection are being used.
3. General tag criteria. All required tags shall meet the following criteria:
  - Tags shall contain a **signal word** and a **major message**.
  - **Signal word** means that portion of a tag's inscription that contains the word or words that are intended to capture the employee's immediate attention.
  - The signal word shall be either "Danger," "Caution," or "Biological Hazard," "BIOHAZARD," or the biological hazard symbol.
  - The signal word and the major message shall be understandable to all employees who may be exposed to the identified hazard.
  - The signal word shall be readable at a minimum distance of five feet (1.52 m) or such greater distance as warranted by the hazard.
  - The **major message** shall indicate the specific hazardous condition or the instruction to be communicated to the employee.
  - The tag's major message shall be presented in either pictographs, written text or both.
4. Tags shall be affixed as close as safely possible to their respective hazards by a positive means such as string, wire, or adhesive that prevents their loss or unintentional removal.
5. Danger tags shall be used in major hazard situations where an immediate hazard presents a threat of death or serious injury to employees. Danger tags shall be used only in these situations.
6. Caution tags shall be used in minor hazard situations where a non-immediate or potential hazard or unsafe practice presents a lesser threat of employee injury. Caution tags shall be used only in these situations.
7. Warning tags. Warning tags may be used to represent a hazard level between "Caution" and "Danger," instead of the required "Caution" tag, provided that they have a signal word of "Warning," an appropriate major message, and otherwise meet the general tag criteria.
8. Biological hazard tags shall be used to identify the actual or potential presence of a biological hazard and to identify equipment, containers, rooms, experimental animals, or combinations thereof, that contain or are contaminated with hazardous biological agents. (See Bloodborne Pathogens.)
9. Other tags. Other tags may be used in addition to those required by the standard, or in other situations where the standard does not require tags, provided that they do not detract from the impact or visibility of the signal word and major message of any required tag.

10. While the standard does not specifically mandate colors to be used on accident prevention tags, the following color scheme is recommended by OSHA for meeting the requirements of this section:
  - “DANGER”-Red, or predominantly red, with lettering or symbols in a contrasting color.
  - “CAUTION”-Yellow, or predominantly yellow, with lettering or symbols in a contrasting color.
  - “WARNING”-Orange, or predominantly orange, with lettering or symbols in a contrasting color.
  - “BIOLOGICAL HAZARD”-Fluorescent orange or orange-red, or predominantly so, with lettering or symbols in a contrasting color.

### **Training Requirements:**

All employees shall be informed as to the meaning of the various tags and signs used throughout the workplace and what special precautions are necessary. Specific training requirements apply to tags used in Lockout/Tagout programs. (See Controlling Hazardous Energy.)

### **Maintenance and Review**

Some employers maintain a listing of workplace signs and tags and their applications to use in training and compliance efforts, or a formal standard operating procedure governing workplace signs and tags. Program effectiveness depends largely on employee training and monitoring by designated managers or supervisors who are responsible for periodic observation and review work practices and facility postings.

### **Additional Information and Resources**

1. Bresnahan, Thomas F., and Bryk, Joseph, “The Hazard Association Values of Accident Prevention Signs,” Journal of American Society of Safety Engineers; January 1975.
2. Dreyfuss, H., Symbol Sourcebook, McGraw Hill; New York, NY, 1972.
3. Glass, R.A. and others, Some Criteria for Colors and Signs in Workplaces, National Bureau of Standards, Washington DC, 1983.
4. J. J. Keller & Associates, Inc. “OSHA Facilities Marking Manual,” Neenah, WI.
5. Industry supplier catalogs and sales representatives.

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