
Safety signs and colours

Part 1. Specification for colour and design

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Foreword

This revision of BS 5378 has been prepared under the direction of the Personal Safety Equipment Standards Committee and consists of three Parts, which may be purchased separately. BS 5378 : 1976 has been withdrawn.

Over many years, widely different codes and systems of safety signs have been developed.

This British Standard specifies a system for giving health or safety information that keeps the use of words to a minimum. The need for such a system has arisen due to the increase in international trade and travel and the development of work forces that do not share a common language.

Attention is drawn to the fact that education and training is an essential part of any system for giving health or safety information.

BS 5378 was originally published in 1976 and was based upon the draft international standard ISO/DIS 3864 issued by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO). Since publication of that draft, the EEC has issued a Directive (77/576/EEC) 'Council Directive of 25 July 1977 on the Approximation of the Laws, Regulations and Administrative Provisions of the Member States relating to the provision of safety signs at places of work'. Effect is given to this Directive in Great Britain by the Safety Signs Regulations 1980 (SI 1980 No. 1471), and BS 5378 : Part 1 : 1980 is called up in these regulations.

The Directive is based upon the ISO work.

The international standard, ISO 3864, was published in 1984 and covers the same subject matter as Parts 1 and 2 of BS 5378, but it is not identical with them. Attention

is drawn in BS 5378 : Part 2 to the main differences between the publications.

This Part of BS 5378 is in line with the EEC Directive (77/576/EEC) and was prepared in anticipation of the preparation of the Safety Signs Regulations 1980 (SI 1980 No. 1471).

BS 5378 : Part 2 gives guidance on the preferred sizes of signs and specifies the colorimetric and photometric properties of materials.

BS 5378 : Part 3 has been produced to cover additional requirements.

This British Standard will also be used as a basis for other standards dealing with signs and symbols for specific purposes. Attention is drawn, for example, to BS 5499 : Part 1, which gives more detailed requirements for signs displayed to give information on fire precautions and means of escape in case of fire. In addition, reference may also be made to BS 5499 : Parts 2 and 3*.

Since international agreement has not yet been reached on a symbol for emergency exits, a symbol for these has not been specifically included as an example in this Part of BS 5378. In the meantime, however, the principles recommended in this Part of BS 5378 for colour and shape should be adopted in relation to such a symbol.

NOTE. This Part of BS 5378 is called up in the Safety Signs Regulations, 1980 (SI 1980 No. 1471).

Compliance with a British Standard does not of itself confer immunity from legal obligations.

British Standard

Safety signs and colours

Part 1. Specification for colour and design

0. Introduction

The purpose of a system of safety colours and safety signs is to draw attention to objects and situations which affect or could affect health or safety.

The use of a system of safety colours and safety signs does not replace the need for appropriate accident prevention measures.

1. Scope

This Part of this British Standard specifies a system of safety colours and safety signs for giving information for use in the prevention of accidents, for warning of health hazards and for meeting certain emergencies. Examples of safety signs having particular meanings are included in appendix A.

2. References

The titles of the standards publications referred to in this Part of this standard are listed on the inside back cover.

3. Definitions

For the purposes of this Part of this standard the following definitions apply.

- 3.1 safety colour.** A colour to which a specific health or safety meaning or purpose is assigned.
- 3.2 contrasting colour.** A colour that contrasts with the safety colour in order to make the latter more conspicuous.
- 3.3 symbol.** A pictorial representation used on a safety sign.
- 3.4 safety sign.** A sign that gives a message about health or safety by a combination of geometric form, safety colour and symbol or text (i.e. words, letters, numbers) or both.
- 3.5 prohibition sign.** A safety sign that indicates that certain behaviour is prohibited.

3.6 warning sign. A safety sign that gives warning of a hazard.

3.7 mandatory sign. A safety sign that indicates that a specific course of action is to be taken.

3.8 safe condition sign. A safety sign that provides information about safe conditions.

3.9 supplementary sign. A sign with text only that may be used in conjunction with a safety sign in order to provide additional information.

4. Safety colours and contrasting colours

4.1 General meaning assigned to safety colours. The safety colours which shall be used and the meanings which shall be assigned to them are given in table 1 together with examples of the use of these safety colours and the contrasting colours which shall be used, if required.

4.2 Danger identification. If identification is required of places where there is a risk of collision, falling, stumbling, falling objects or where there are steps, holes in floors or similar hazards, the following combination of fluorescent orange-red* or safety colour yellow and in either case black shall be used. The proportion of fluorescent orange-red or yellow shall be at least 50 %.



This danger identification is used to identify the perimeter of the hazard. It may be used with or without a safety sign, but where a safety sign is appropriate to identify a particular hazard, or where the situation is covered by a sign set out in appendix A, the danger identification marking shall not be used as a substitute for the safety sign.

Table 1. Safety colours and contrasting colours

Safety colour	Meaning or purpose	Examples of use	Contrasting colour (if required)	Symbol colour
Red*	Stop Prohibition	Stop signs Identification and colour of emergency shutdown devices Prohibition signs	White	Black
Yellow	Caution, risk of danger	Indication of hazards (fire, explosion, radiation, chemical, etc.) Warning signs Identification of thresholds, dangerous passages, obstacles (see also 4.2)	Black	Black
Blue	Mandatory action	Obligation to wear personal safety equipment Mandatory signs	White	White
Green	Safe condition	Identification of safety showers, first-aid posts and rescue points Emergency exit signs	White	White

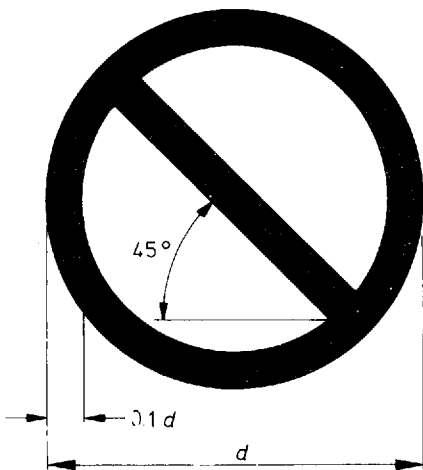
*Red is also used to identify fire fighting equipment and its location.

5.1 General. The general layout of safety signs shall be as described in 5.2.

NOTE. Corners may be radiused, if required.

Where a safety sign shown in appendix A of this Part is appropriate to convey a particular meaning, that safety sign shall be used. In other cases, the safety sign shall comply with the appropriate layout described in 5.2 and any symbol shall comply with the requirements specified in 5.3.

5.2 Layout



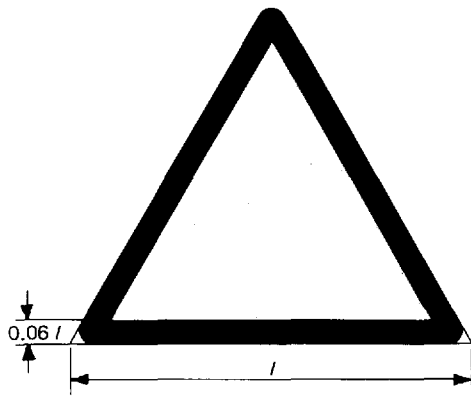
5.2.1 Prohibition signs

Background colour shall be white. Circular band and cross bar shall be red.

The symbol shall be black and placed centrally on the background, and shall not obliterate the cross bar.

Red shall cover at least 35 % of the area of the safety sign.

NOTE. Any text is to be put on a supplementary sign.

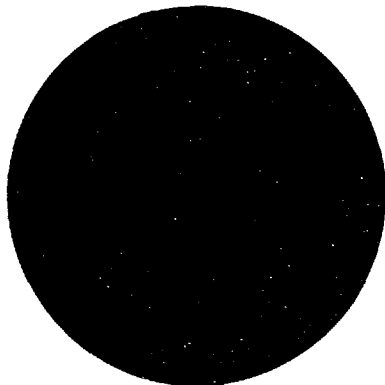


5.2.2 Warning signs

Background colour shall be yellow.

Triangular band shall be black.

The symbol or text shall be black and placed centrally on the background. Yellow shall cover at least 50 % of the area of the safety sign.



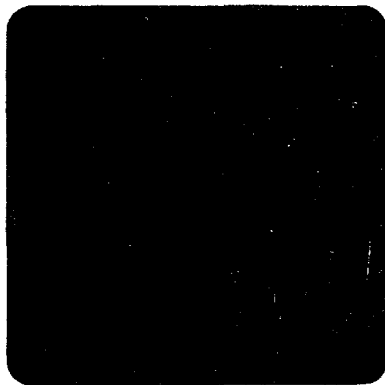
5.2.3 Mandatory signs

Background colour shall be blue.

The symbol or text shall be white and placed centrally on the background.

Blue shall cover at least 50 % of the area of the safety sign.

NOTE. The symbols used on the mandatory signs shown in appendix A of this Part depict general types of protection. Where necessary, a specific type or level of protection should be indicated, in text, on a supplementary sign used in conjunction with the appropriate mandatory sign.



5.2.4 Safe condition signs

Background colour shall be green.

The symbol or text shall be white. The shape of the sign shall be oblong or square as necessary to accommodate the symbol or text.

Green shall cover at least 50 % of the area of the safety sign.

5.3 Design of symbols. The design of symbols shall be as simple as possible and details not essential for the understanding of the message shall be omitted.

6. Supplementary signs

Supplementary signs shall be oblong or square.

The background colour shall be white with the text in black. Alternatively, the background colour shall be the same as the safety colour used on the safety sign it is supplementing, with the text in the relevant contrasting colour.

Appendix A

Examples of safety signs and their meanings*

Safety sign	Meaning	
A.1 Prohibition signs		
A.1.1		No smoking
A.1.2		Smoking and naked flames prohibited
A.1.3		Pedestrians prohibited
A.1.4		Do not extinguish with water

Safety sign

Meaning

A.1.5



Not drinking water (that is, do not drink)

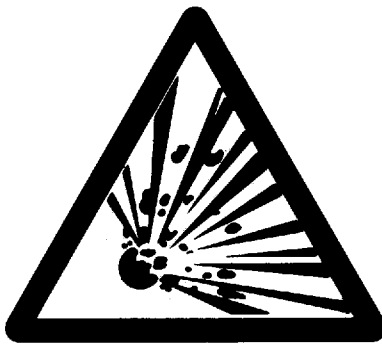
A.2 Warning signs

A.2.1



Caution, risk of fire

A.2.2



Caution, risk of explosion

A.2.3



Caution, toxic hazard

Safety sign

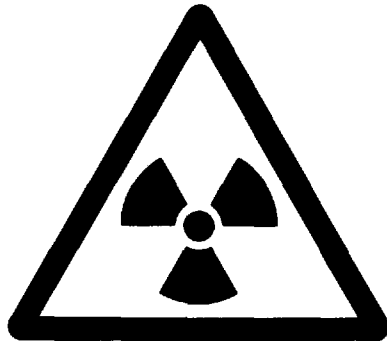
Meaning

A.2.4



Caution, corrosive substance

A.2.5



Caution, risk of ionizing radiation
NOTE. Symbol as specified in BS 3510

A.2.6



Caution, overhead load

A.2.7

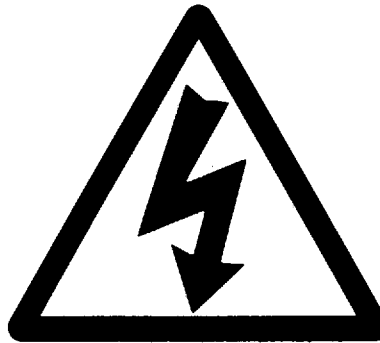


Caution, industrial trucks

Safety sign

Meaning

A.2.8



Caution, risk of electric shock

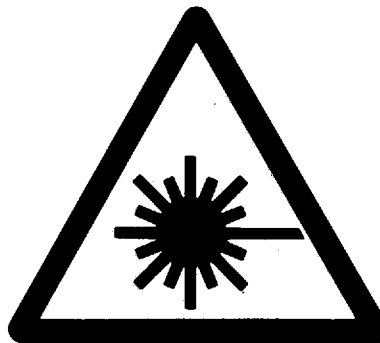
NOTE. Symbol as specified in International Electrotechnical Commission publication IEC 417

A.2.9



General warning, caution, risk of danger

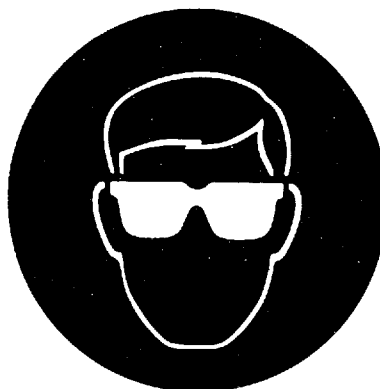
A.2.10



Caution, laser beam

A.3 Mandatory signs

A.3.1

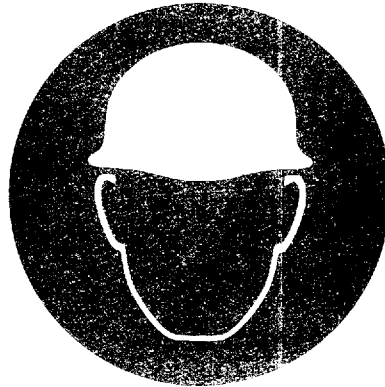


Eye protection must be worn

Safety sign

Meaning

A.3.2



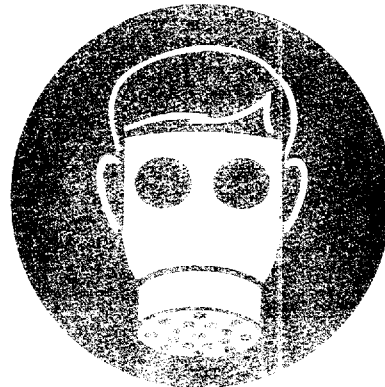
Head protection must be worn

A.3.3



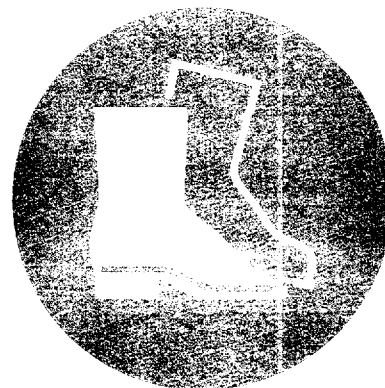
Hearing protection must be worn

A.3.4


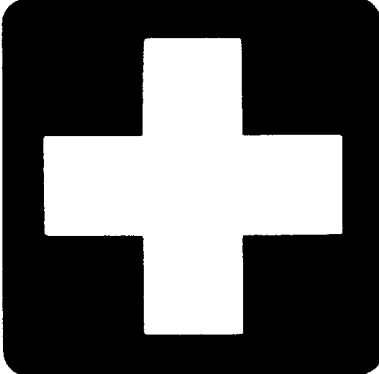
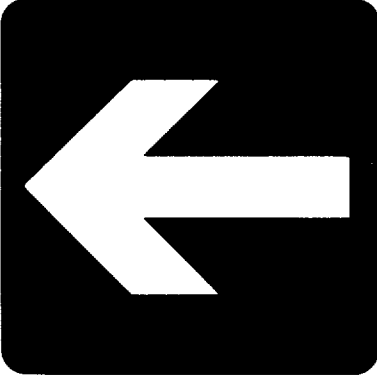


Respiratory protection must be worn

A.3.5



Foot protection must be worn

Safety sign	Meaning	
A.3.6		Hand protection must be worn
A.4 Safe condition signs		
A.4.1		First aid
A.4.2		Indication of direction (the standard arrow shall not be used alone as a safety sign)

Standards publications referred to

*BS 2560	Specification for exit signs (internally illuminated)
BS 3510	A basic symbol to denote the actual or potential presence of ionizing radiation
*BS 4218	Specification for self-luminous exit signs
*BS 5378	Safety signs and colours Part 2 Specification for colorimetric and photometric properties of materials Part 3 Specification for additional signs to those given in BS 5378 : Part 1
*BS 5499	Fire safety signs, notices and graphic symbols Part 1 Specification for fire safety signs
IEC 417	Graphical symbols for use on equipment Index, survey and compilation of the single sheets
*ISO 3864	Safety colours and safety signs

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The Personal Safety Equipment Standards Committee, under whose direction this British Standard was prepared, consists of representatives from the following Government departments and scientific and industrial organizations:

- British Footwear Manufacturers' Federation
- British Rubber Manufacturers' Association
- British Safety Council
- *British Steel Industry
- Cement Makers' Federation
- *Chemical Industries Association
- Council of Ironfoundry Associations
- Department of Industry, National Engineering Laboratory
- *Electricity Supply Industry in England and Wales
- *Engineering Employers' Federation
- Engineering Equipment Users Association
- Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
- Glass Manufacturers' Federation
- *Health and Safety Executive
- *Industrial Safety (Protective Equipment) Manufacturers' Association
- Institute of British Foundrymen
- Institution of Civil Engineers
- Institution of Industrial Safety Officers

- Institution of Production Engineers
- Iron and Steel Trades Confederation
- Light Metal Traders Organizations
- Medical Research Council
- Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food
- *National Coal Board
- National Joint Council for the Building Industry (Operatives Side)
- National Radiological Protection Board
- *Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
- Trades Union Congress

The organizations marked with an asterisk in the above list, together with the following, were directly represented on the Technical committee entrusted with the preparation of this British Standard:

- British Non-ferrous Metals Federation
- British Sign Association
- Chartered Institution of Building Services
- Chief and Assistant Chief Fire Officers' Association
- Department of Health and Social Security
- Institution of Fire Engineers
- Ministry of Defence
- Paintmakers' Association of Great Britain Ltd.
- Individual expert

Amendments issued since publication

Amd. No.	Date of issue	Text affected
5483	August 1987	Indicated by a line in the margin