

BRITISH STANDARD

Beach safety flags – Part 1: Colour, shape and meaning

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Summary of pages

This document comprises a front cover, an inside front cover, pages i and ii, pages 1 to 7, and a back cover.

Foreword

Publishing information

This part of BS 8504 was published by BSI and came into effect on 31 July 2006. It was prepared by Subcommittee PH/8/2, *Public information graphical symbols and signs*, under the authority of Technical Committee PH/8, *Graphical symbols*. A list of organizations represented on this committee can be obtained on request to its secretary.

Relationship with other publications

BS 8504 is published in two parts:

- *Part 1: Colour, shape and meaning;*
- *Part 2: Materials – Requirements and test methods.*

Information about this document

The purpose of BS 8504 is to specify a standardized set of beach safety flags. It is important that beach safety flags are standardized to aid their comprehension. Whilst education in the comprehension of beach safety flags is essential, incomprehension caused by lack of standardization can lead to confusion and possibly danger. International travel increases the need for standardized methods of safety communication.

Presentational conventions

The provisions of this standard are presented in roman (i.e. upright) type. Its requirements are expressed in sentences in which the principal auxiliary verb is “shall”.

Commentary, explanation and general informative material is presented in smaller italic type, and does not constitute a normative element.

Contractual and legal considerations

This publication does not purport to include all the necessary provisions of a contract. Users are responsible for its correct application.

Compliance with a British Standard cannot confer immunity from legal obligations.

1 Scope

This part of BS 8504 specifies requirements for the shape and colour of beach safety flags for the management of activities on coastal and inland beaches, to be used for giving information on wind and water conditions and other hazardous conditions, and to indicate the location of swimming and other aquatic activity zones extending from the beach into the water.

This standard is not applicable to flags for use on firing ranges or to flags for use to indicate water quality.

NOTE 1 Guidance on the use of beach safety flags is given in Annex A.

NOTE 2 The illustrations in this standard are as accurate as possible within the limitations of the printing process. BSI does not claim that the colours used correspond to any proprietary colour system.

2 Normative references

The following referenced documents are indispensable for the application of this document. For dated references, only the edition cited applies. For undated references, the latest edition of the referenced document (including any amendments) applies.

BS 8504-2, *Beach safety flags – Part 2: Materials – Requirements and test methods*

3 Terms and definitions

For the purposes of this part of BS 8504 the following terms and definitions apply.

3.1 beach

area forming a shoreline or sloping bank at the edge of the sea or a river estuary or lake

NOTE A beach is usually covered by sand or pebbles, but could be covered by an artificial surface.

3.2 beach safety flag

coloured material that gives a particular safety message by means of a combination of one or more colours and a geometric shape, and is attached by one end to a pole or rope

NOTE A flag can also have additional support, e.g. a horizontal support.




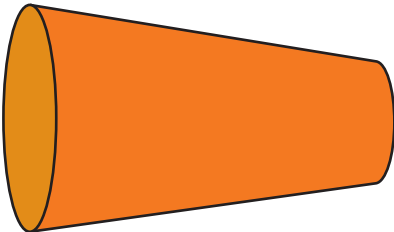
4 General

Beach safety flags shall be made of material with physical, colorimetric and photometric properties as specified in BS 8504-2.

5 Meaning, function, shape and colour of beach safety flags

The meaning, function, shape and colour of beach safety flags shall be as specified in Table 1.

Table 1 Meaning, function, shape and colour of beach safety flags

Beach safety flag	Meaning, function, shape and colour	
 <p style="text-align: right;">8504.01</p>	Meaning	Dangerous conditions; do not enter the water
	Function	To signify a severe hazard, that water conditions are unsafe for swimming and other water activities and that people should not enter the water
	Shape and colour	Rectangle, red
 <p style="text-align: right;">8504.02</p>	Meaning	Lifeguard patrolled swimming and body boarding zone or lifeguard on duty
	Function	To signify a swimming and body boarding zone which has a lifeguard patrol or to signify that a lifeguard is on duty
	Shape and colour	Rectangle, red and yellow. Divided horizontally into two equal halves; red half at the top
 <p style="text-align: right;">8504.03</p>	Meaning	Surfboard and other water craft zone or zone boundary
	Function	To signify a zone, or the boundary of a zone, designated for use of surfboards and other water craft
	Shape and colour	Rectangle, black and white. Divided into four equal rectangles; two black and two white. Upper black rectangle at the pole side
 <p style="text-align: right;">8504.04</p>	Meaning	Danger; no inflatables to be used on the water
	Function	To signify the danger of using inflatables in windy or unsafe water conditions
	Shape and colour	Truncated cone, orange

6 Dimensions of beach safety flags

6.1 Rectangular flags

For rectangular flags the minimum dimensions shall be 750 mm × 900 mm. The width shall always exceed the height by a minimum of 20 % of the height and by a maximum of 35 % of the height.

NOTE The recommended ratio of flag length to flag-pole height is 3:10, for example a 900 mm long flag would need a 3 m high flag-pole.

6.2 Conical flags

Conical flags shall be in the form of a truncated cone, incorporating a rigid ring at the large end, which shall have a minimum length of 1 500 mm, and a minimum diameter of 250 mm at the small end and 500 mm at the large end. The ratio of large end diameter to small end diameter to length shall be 2:1:6.

Annex A (informative) **Guidance on the use of beach safety flags**

A.1 **General**

There are two types of beach safety flags, those indicating dangerous conditions and those used to indicate zones on the beach suitable for particular activities (see Table 1).

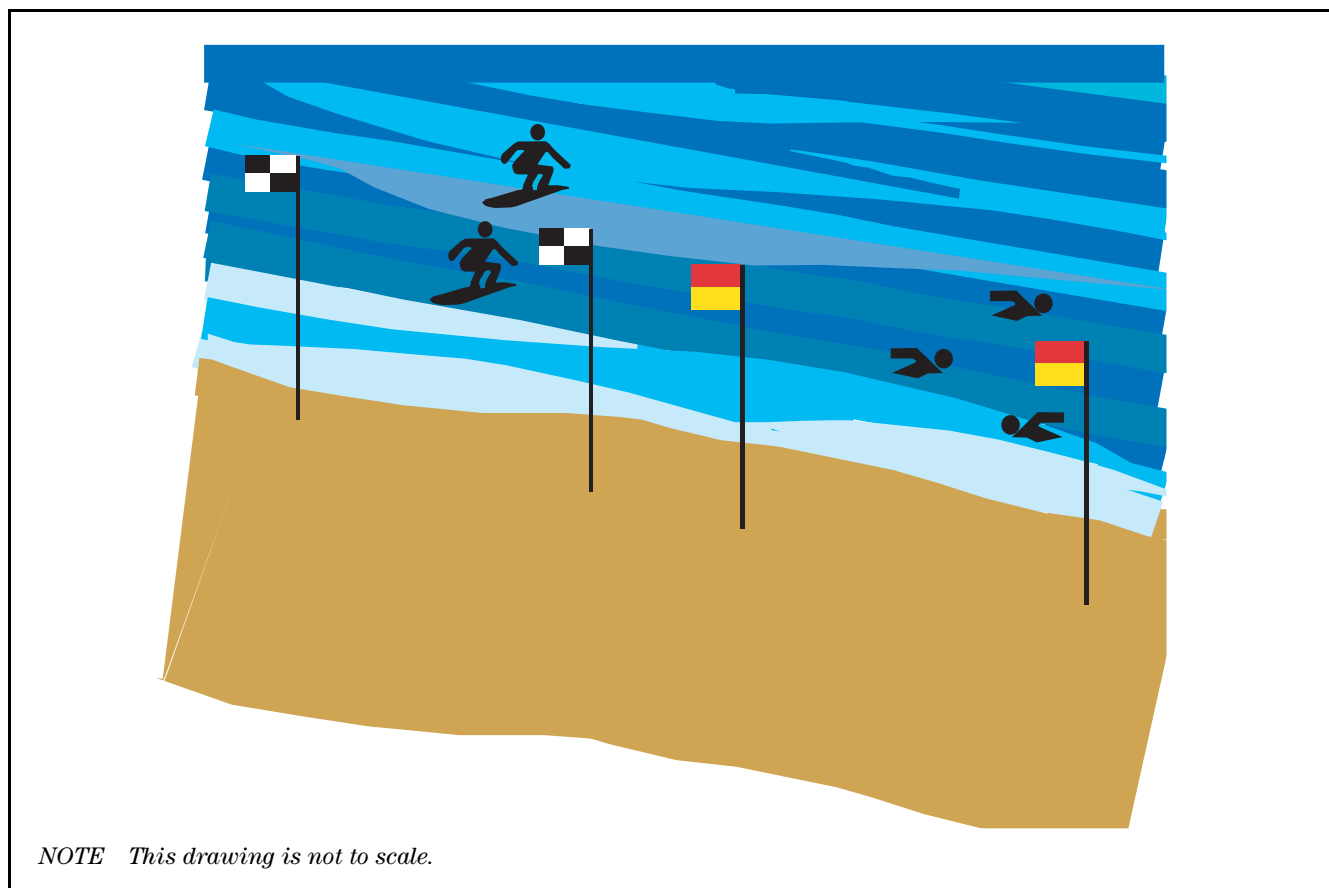
Red flags and orange truncated cones indicate dangerous conditions and should be used singly. In particular, care should be taken to ensure that only one red flag is visible on any given beach, or area of a beach, as two red flags could be mistaken for indication of a safe zone, thus putting people at risk.

Red and yellow flags should be used in pairs to designate each area along a beach which is most closely supervised or patrolled, and to which it is intended that swimming and body boarding is to be confined. The positions of red and yellow flags, indicating a lifeguard patrolled zone, should be designated by a qualified lifeguard. Where a lifeguard patrolled zone is not used, a single red and yellow flag may be used to indicate that a lifeguard is on duty. This should only be displayed at the lifeguard station, hut or highchair etc.

Black and white flags should be used to designate a zone, or the boundary of a zone, on a beach for use of surfboards and other water craft. These flags should be positioned outside of the area designated by the red and yellow flags for swimming and body boarding.

NOTE An example of positioning of red and yellow flags and black and white flags is illustrated in Figure A.1.

Figure A.1 Example of positioning of beach safety flags where there are separate surfing and swimming zones



A.2 Flag-poles

Each flag should be attached to a flag-pole, which should be erected such that the lowest point of the flag, when at rest, is not less than 2.3 m above the immediately surrounding ground level.

The flag-pole should be securely anchored so as to be stable under the prevailing weather conditions in the area.

NOTE 1 This may be done, for example, by means of a sand spike or by securing the flag-pole to a stand (for example a tripod or a four-legged stand) or to a solid base.

NOTE 2 If the flag is secured to a stand, the stand may also be used to display safety information.

A.3 Positioning of beach safety flags

Flags should be positioned so that they can be readily seen by persons on the beach and in the water. Flags should be mounted high enough to be seen above any obstructions.

Flags should be positioned so that they are visible without obstruction by other structures or by any flora and fauna that might be present.

The locations of flags should be carefully selected to ensure that the flags themselves, in particular the flag-poles, do not present a hazard. Flags should not be located where a flying flag could hit passers-by, or where the flag-pole could present a trip hazard.

A.4 Use of beach safety flags

It is essential that the flags are used only when a lifeguard is present.

As the environmental conditions can alter from day to day, and in some cases during the course of a day, conditions should be monitored and flags hoisted or taken down accordingly. In the case of flags used to zone a section of beach or water activity, conditions should be monitored and these flags moved to suitable locations as any changes in conditions dictate.

Because of the need for a lifeguard to be present to monitor the conditions, and possibly to change flags, it is essential that the times of day and, where applicable, days of the week and/or months of the year during which beach safety flag systems are operated on a particular beach are well publicized. There should also be a well publicized warning that when no flags are displayed this means that the beach is not manned by a lifeguard.

A.5 Inspection and maintenance of flags and flag-poles

Inspection and maintenance of flags and flag-poles should be carried out on a regular basis. Flags can have a limited lifespan, particularly in adverse weather conditions. Any flag that has become torn or faded should be replaced.

A.6 Storage of flags

If flags are to be stored, for example at the end of the season, care should be taken to ensure that they are completely dry before they are put into storage. Flags should be stored in dry conditions away from sources of heat and chemicals. Flags that have been stored should be carefully inspected before they are put back into use.

A.7 Explanatory text and associated information

To ensure water users and members of the public are aware of the meaning of certain flags it might be necessary to use text to explain the meaning. The text should either be on a board fixed to the flag-pole, or given on beach safety information boards, positioned, for example, at the entrances to the beach. Use of information boards should be in accordance with RNLI publication *A guide to beach safety signs, flags and symbols* [1]

The text should be as brief as possible. It should indicate the primary meaning of the flag when hoisted and give details of the meanings of the flags, their locations and the times during which the beach safety flag system is in operation.

If possible the beach operator should arrange for this information also to be included in local information and publicity leaflets for tourists.

Bibliography

- [1] ROYAL NATIONAL LIFEBOAT INSTITUTION. *A guide to beach safety signs, flags and symbols*. RNLI, 2005.
- [2] ROYAL SOCIETY FOR THE PREVENTION OF ACCIDENTS. *Safety on beaches. Operational guidelines*. RoSPA, 2004.

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London
W4 4AL