



Safety Signs

Safety and Environmental Management System

SEMS 5-5

When is it that people pay the most attention to signs? It seems to be while driving a car. That's because signs are the simplest way to direct, instruct, and warn people. The driver is given messages like "right lane ends", "road construction ahead", "speed limit ___ mph", etc.

Road and travel indicators are not the only signs that direct, instruct and warn. Safety signs at the workplace direct, instruct and warn employees too. Just as it is dangerous to ignore road signs, it is dangerous to ignore workplace safety signs. These messages are in place to prevent accidents and injury. They alert employees to possible hazards in the workplace.

But as on the roadway, different signs at the workplace have different meanings. Let's take a look at a few of the more common of these, their colors and what the colors symbolize:

- **DANGER:** These signs have a **red & black** background and warn of **immediate** danger. Failure to comply could result in serious injury or death.
Example: DANGER: High Voltage
- **CAUTION:** These signs have a **yellow** background and warn of **potential** hazards. They also instruct you to take certain measures to protect yourself.
Example: Hard Hat Required
- **WARNING:** These signs have an **orange** background and indicate immediate danger or the potential for serious injury or death if not obeyed.
Example: Keep hands away.
- **BIOHAZARD:** These signs have a **fluorescent-orange** or an **orange-red** background to indicate the presence of infectious **biological** material.
- **SAFETY INSTRUCTION:** These signs have a **green, white and black** background and give directions for safe procedures.

Correct placement of signs also adds to their effectiveness. Workplace safety signs should be placed as close to the hazard as possible. In some cases, a *Pre-Warning System* is a good idea. This is done by using several signs together, and placing them progressively closer to the hazard before people come close to the actual danger.

Unfortunately, safety journals are filled with stories about people who were seriously injured or lost their lives because they failed to observe workplace safety signage. It's up to YOU to read and obey the posted signs. Not doing so can have serious consequences.

