

Signage

Workplace transport site safety information sheet WPT22

This information will be useful to anyone who uses workplace transport or who works where it is used. It will help employers, managers and supervisors to assess their workplace and make improvements. The checklists will help you to prepare your risk assessment.

Signage plays an important part in traffic management and in making sure that sites are safe and efficient. Signs are used to inform, warn and instruct people using the site. Signs should be used to show vehicle and pedestrian routes, height and weight restrictions, speed limits and other safety information.

By law, the road signs used to warn or inform traffic in private workplaces should be the same as those used on public roads. Drivers and pedestrians should therefore expect the road layout, road signs, road furniture and markings on site to be similar to those on public roads. The standard road signs that should be used are set out in the Highway Code.

Signs need to be clearly drawn, clean and should not be damaged. Signs are necessary to tell drivers and pedestrians about hazards and the routes they should use, and also to instruct people how to behave safely (eg whether they must use protective equipment).

Common problems

Signs are overloaded with information: Signs can contain too much information. As a result, people reading the sign have difficulty in taking in and processing the information.

Inadequate use of signs on site: Some sites may use too few signs or may not use signs at all. Sites where routes and hazards are not clearly signed can be dangerous – site users will be more likely to have accidents. Drivers and pedestrians need to be made aware of hazards and vehicle and pedestrian routes to work safely. This problem is worse for occasional visitors to a site who are more likely to be unfamiliar with the layout and hazards.

Sometimes the opposite can occur and too many signs may be used on a site. This can lead to confusion, conflicting



information, and provide site users with more information than they can process. Signs may be duplicated or an out-of-date sign may not have been removed.

Wrongly positioned signs: Signs can be positioned in the wrong place or where they are not easily visible, eg obscured by buildings, parked vehicles and equipment. They can also give information that is wrong for their location, eg warning signs positioned too close to a hazard won't give people enough time to react.

Signs provide wrong or out-of-date information: If signs are not kept up to date they will display incorrect information. Site users who are misinformed are less likely to be able to avoid hazards. This can occur when a site layout or site operations have changed and signs have not been updated. For example, site users will be put at risk of an accident if the relevant warning and direction signs are not provided for any new hazards or vehicle or pedestrian routes.

Signs are of the wrong type or don't conform to current regulations: Signs can be of the wrong type and therefore fail to meet current regulations. Road signs used on site should be in accordance with Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002. Safety signs should meet the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996.

Worn, faded and damaged signs: Signs can become worn and faded as they age and weather. Signs can be hit by

vehicles and damaged if they are located too close to vehicle routes and loading equipment.

Checklist – what to look out for

- Wrongly positioned signs that don't provide enough warning of hazards or are not clearly visible.
- Signs provide wrong or out-of-date information.
- Worn, faded and damaged signs.
- Signs are of the wrong type or don't conform to current regulations.
- Inadequate use of signs on site.
- Signs are overloaded with information.

How can you deal with common problems?

Signage problems can be prevented by careful maintenance and by providing the correct signs where they are needed. Signage should be regularly reviewed and updated to meet changes to the operation and layout of your site.

Replace worn, faded or damaged signs: Signs that have become worn, faded and damaged should be replaced. When replacing signs think about whether they are still appropriate and provide the correct information.

Remove unnecessary or out-of-date signs: Remove unnecessary signs so that they don't confuse or misinform site users. Signs with out-of-date information should be removed and, if necessary, replaced with a new sign containing the correct information.

Provide the necessary warning and direction signs: Where there is a hazard, eg low structure or pedestrian crossing, there should be an appropriate warning sign. Warning signs can increase the attention drivers pay to safety (especially visiting drivers). Signs should be placed so that people have time to see them, understand them and take any action to reduce risk before they reach the hazard. All signs should:

- be clear and easy to understand;
- stand out enough to be noticed; and
- be kept clean and well maintained at all times.

Traffic calming signs need to contain the distance of road that the traffic calming covers.

Where a safety sign wouldn't help reduce the risk or where the risk is not significant there is no need to provide a warning sign.

As well as providing warning signs, vehicle and pedestrian routes should also be clearly signed to make sure that they are followed by site users.

Relocate signs if they are in the wrong place: Signs that are in the wrong place should be relocated so that they are easily seen. For example, height restriction signs should be

positioned far enough in front of the hazard so that vehicles that break the restriction can safely stop before reaching it.

Make sure that signs are well lit: Signs should be visible in all lighting conditions. Where possible, they should be positioned in well lit areas. Signs that are used in low light and night-time conditions need to be either lit or reflective so that they are easily visible.

Use other complimentary traffic management measures: Signs inform site users of hazards, and pedestrian and vehicle routes. Other complimentary traffic management measures should be used to reinforce the message of the sign and to make sure site users change behaviour accordingly. For example, signs can make drivers aware of speed limits while engineering measures, such as traffic calming, can force vehicles to slow to within the speed limit.

Checklist

- Replace worn, faded or damaged signs.
- Remove unnecessary or out-of-date signs.
- Provide new signs where necessary.
- Make sure that signs are well lit.
- Make sure signs are well maintained.
- Use other complimentary traffic management measures to reinforce the use of signing.

Checking your site

Carry out a visual inspection of your site to look for problems with signs. Walk around the premises, make notes and take photographs of any problems (you may also wish to drive). In particular look for signs that are worn or damaged, not clearly visible or contain incorrect information. Mark the problem areas on a site plan.

When completing a visual inspection, first consider whether each sign is necessary and is used effectively. Next, consider some of the following questions:

- Are there any worn, faded or damaged signs?
- Are there any signs that are not clearly visible?
- Do any signs need removing or replacing?
- Are there any hazards that are not correctly signed?
- Are vehicle and pedestrian routes clearly signed?
- Are all signs correctly illuminated?
- Are all signs readable?

If a more detailed and wider-reaching guide is required see the *Site inspection: Workplace transport checklist* at www.hse.gov.uk/workplacetransport.

You may want to commission a consultant to review signing on your site. The review should include information on:

- the effectiveness of signs used on your site;
- whether the signs comply with current legal requirements;
- any other signage problems your site may have; and
- recommended mitigation measures.

As well as a visual inspection, you could ask your staff for feedback about the signing on your site. This will help you to identify whether the signs used are effective, giving the correct information and whether additional traffic management measures are needed. It is important to find out whether drivers and pedestrians feel that they are clearly directed around site and whether they are aware of hazards.

Checklist

- Carry out a visual inspection of signage on your site.
- Pay for a professional signage review if you feel you cannot do this properly yourself.
- Ask staff and visitors whether signs on site are helpful or cause problems.

Where to get help

If you have a problem with signage on your site, you might be able to solve it yourself. If you are unsure, speak to your health and safety workplace representative or contact HSE for advice. It may be more cost effective to have a professional assess your site and carry out the work.

You can also get advice by speaking to other similar local businesses – look for examples of good practice. Contact your local trade association or Chamber of Commerce for recommended local suppliers or look in the *Yellow Pages* for highways contractors.

Checklist

- Can you fix the problem yourself or do you need professional help?
- Speak to your health and safety representative and your staff.
- If further information is required, speak to the HSE.
- Speak to other site managers about how they have made good use of signs on their sites.
- Employ a consultant to complete a signage review.

What might it cost?

- A review of signage is likely to cost from around £1500 depending on the size of your site.
- A lit road sign costs £400–£1000.
- An unlit road sign costs £200–£500.
- Removing and re-erecting a sign costs from around £30.

(These costs are a guide and may vary significantly for individual sites and circumstances.)

Find out more

Workplace transport safety: An employers' guide HSG136 (Second edition) HSE Books 2005 ISBN 978 0 7176 6154 1

Designing for deliveries Freight Transport Association 1998 ISBN 978 0 902991 66 8

Workplace transport safety: An overview Leaflet INDG199(rev1) HSE Books 2005 (single copy free or priced packs of 5 ISBN 978 0 7176 2821 6) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg199.pdf

BS 873-1:1983 *Road traffic signs and internally illuminated bollards* British Standards Institution

Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions 2002 SI 2002/3113 The Stationery Office 2002 ISBN 978 0 11 042942 7

Signpost to the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 Leaflet INDG184 HSE Books 1996 (single copy free or priced packs of 15 ISBN 978 0 7176 1139 3) www.hse.gov.uk/pubns/indg184.htm

Further information

HSE priced and free publications can be viewed online or ordered from www.hse.gov.uk or contact HSE Books, PO Box 1999, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 2WA Tel: 01787 881165 Fax: 01787 313995. HSE priced publications are also available from bookshops.

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This document contains notes on good practice which are not compulsory but which you may find helpful in considering what you need to do.

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