



HOW TO READ AND UNDERSTAND SAFETY SIGNAGE

Safety signage is used throughout workplaces to communicate hazards, required actions, and emergency information. These signs are designed to be quickly recognised and understood, even at a distance.

Ignoring or misunderstanding safety signage can lead to serious injuries, as these signs are often placed where specific risks exist. This toolbox talk focuses on how to correctly read and understand safety signage.

Why Safety Signage Is Important

Safety signs provide immediate information about:

- Hazards in the area.
- Required PPE.
- Prohibited actions.
- Emergency routes and equipment.

They act as a constant reminder of risks and help prevent incidents by guiding behaviour.

Types of Safety Signs

Understanding the different types of signs is essential:

- **Prohibition Signs (Red):** Indicate something you must NOT do.
(e.g. No smoking, no entry)
- **Mandatory Signs (Blue):** Indicate actions you MUST follow.
(e.g. Wear PPE, eye protection required)
- **Warning Signs (Yellow):** Alert you to potential hazards.
(e.g. Slip hazard, electrical danger)
- **Emergency Signs (Green):** Show safe conditions or escape routes.
(e.g. Emergency exit, first aid station)

Each colour and symbol has a specific meaning.

Common Mistakes

Workers sometimes:

- Ignore signs because they are familiar with the area.
- Fail to notice signs due to rushing or distraction.
- Misinterpret symbols.
- Remove or cover signage during work activities.
- Assume signs do not apply to their task.

These mistakes increase the risk of incidents.

How to Use Safety Signage Properly

To stay safe:

- Always look for signage when entering a new area.
- Follow the instructions given on signs.
- Do not remove or ignore signage.
- Ensure temporary signage (e.g. wet floor signs) is clearly visible.
- Report missing or damaged signs.
- Ask if you are unsure what a sign means.

Signage is only effective if it is seen and followed.

Your Responsibility

Every worker must respect safety signage. It is part of the workplace safety system and is there to protect you and others. Following signage helps reduce risks and ensures safe movement and behaviour on site.

Summary

Safety signage provides clear instructions about hazards, required actions, and emergency information. Understanding the different types of signs and following their instructions is essential for preventing incidents. Always stay alert, recognise signage, and act accordingly to maintain a safe work environment.

Discussion Points

1. What safety signs are most common in our work areas?
2. Have you ever seen signage being ignored or removed?
3. What should you do if you do not understand a safety sign?

