



## Safety signs in the catering industry

### Catering Information Sheet No 16

#### Introduction

All businesses need to display safety signs of some sort but deciding what is needed can be confusing. This information sheet sets out in simple terms what the majority of catering establishments need to do. It does not cover any signs which food hygiene law may require.

Most requirements are covered by the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. These require signs wherever a risk has not been controlled by other means. For example, if a wet area of floor is cordoned off, a warning sign will not be needed, because the barrier will keep people out of the danger area. Signs are not needed where the sign would not reduce the risk or the risk is insignificant.

The following signs are the ones most likely to be needed in catering premises. Others may be necessary, depending on the risks present.

#### Wet floors

These need to be used wherever a slippery area is not cordoned off. Lightweight stands holding double-sided signs are readily available.



(black on yellow background)

#### Chemical storage

Where hazardous cleaning chemicals are stored, apart from keeping the store locked, a suitable warning notice should be posted if it is considered this would help to reduce the risk of injury, eg:



(black on yellow background)

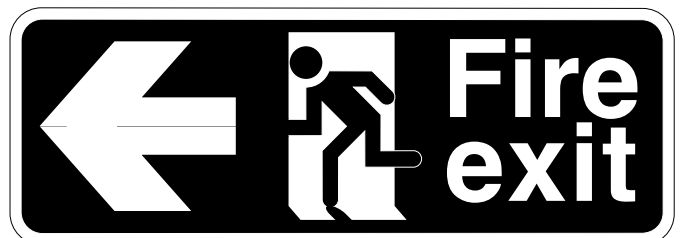


(black on yellow background)

#### Fire signs

The Regulations apply in relation to general fire precautions.

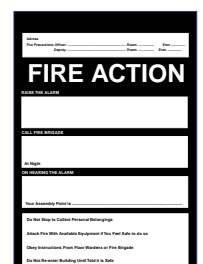
Since 24 December 1998 the older, text-only 'fire exit' signs should have been supplemented or replaced with pictogram signs. Fire safety signs complying with BS 5499: Part 1: 1990 already contain a pictogram and do not require changing.



(white on green background)

#### Fire action signs

These and other fire safety signs, such as fire extinguisher location signs shown below, will be needed.

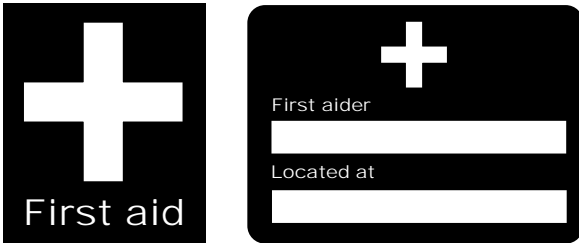


(white on red background or multisign)

Advice on fire safety signs can be obtained from your local fire brigade.

## First aid

Signs showing the location of first-aid facilities will be needed. Advice on the action to take in the case of electric shock is no longer a legal requirement but is recommended (see Further reading for details of poster).



(white on green background)

## Gas pipes and LPG cylinder stores

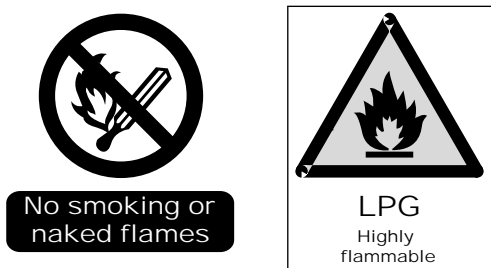
Pipes carrying dangerous substances such as flammable gas should be labelled, eg:



(black on yellow background)

Main gas isolation valves should be similarly labelled and their 'on' and 'off' positions should also be indicated.

LPG cylinder stores should have the following signs:



(No smoking - black symbol on white background inside a red circle with a red diagonal line)



(LPG - black symbol on yellow background)

## Fragile roofs

Signs should be erected at roof access points and at the top of outside walls where ladders may be placed.



(black on yellow background)

## Other signs and posters

- *Health and safety law - What you should know* (there is a legal requirement to display this poster or distribute equivalent leaflet)
- Certificate of Employer's Liability Insurance (there is a legal requirement to display this)
- Scalds and burns are common in kitchens. A poster showing recommended action is advisable, eg 'First Aid for Burns'
- No smoking signs

## Design of signs

Commercially bought (and self-made) signs should comply with the Regulations. They generally fall into six categories:

- Prohibition signs - black symbol on a white background inside a red circle with a red diagonal line across the circle
- Warning signs - black symbol on a yellow background inside a black triangle
- Mandatory signs - white symbol on a blue circular background
- Emergency escapes - white symbol on a green rectangular or square background
- Fire-fighting signs - white symbol on a red rectangular or square background
- Obstacles or dangerous locations (eg low head-height, tripping hazard etc) - alternating yellow and black stripes

## What you should do next

Using the previous information, check your existing signs to ensure:

- you have the correct signs;
- they carry the correct warning symbol where appropriate;
- they are suitably located and not obscured;
- they are clean, durable and weatherproof where necessary;
- illuminated signs have regular lamp checks; and
- they are used when required (eg 'Caution wet floor' signs).

## Further reading

*Safety signs and signals. The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996. Guidance on Regulations L64* HSE Books 1996  
ISBN 0 7176 0870 0

*Health and safety law - What you should know* (encapsulated poster) HSE Books 1999  
ISBN 0 7176 2493 5

*Health and safety law - What you should know* (leaflet) HSE Books 1999 (Single copies free, multiple copies in priced packs ISBN 0 7176 1702 5)

*Emergency procedures for an electric shock casualty* (encapsulated poster) HSE Books 1999  
ISBN 0 7176 2462 5

*Signpost to the Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996* INDG184 HSE Books 1996 (Single copies free, also available in priced packs ISBN 0 7176 1139 6)

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

While every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the references listed in this publication, their future availability cannot be guaranteed.

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