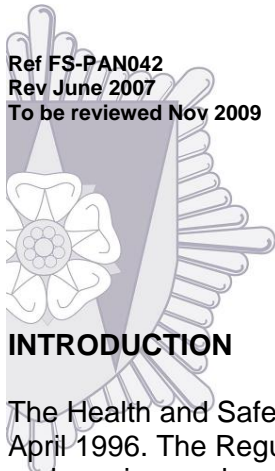


# Advice Leaflet 42

## Shop Premises - Signs and Notices for Fire Safety

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### INTRODUCTION

The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 came into force from 1 April 1996. The Regulations were made under the Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and require employers to ensure safety signs are provided (or are in place) and maintained in circumstances where risks to health and safety have not been avoided by other means.

Fire safety signs, must comply with the Regulations' specific requirements. In the Regulations, the definition of "*fire safety signs*" includes signs and notices, the identification and marking of fire fighting equipment, and acoustic signals (e.g. fire alarms).

The Regulations put responsibilities on employers in relation to risks to their employees. Self-employed persons are not covered. No responsibilities are placed on employers in relation to non-employees (e.g. visitors, neighbours), but employers still have general health and safety duties toward them under the 1974 Act and the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999, and the provision of suitable signs may be seen as part of this duty.

Additionally the Fire Authority enforces the fire safety sign requirements for premises covered by the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 for which it is the enforcing authority. It is unlikely that premises having no provision of suitable signs or notices will demonstrate compliance with the Order, unless the premises are very simple and has been considered as part of the required fire risk assessment.

### SIGNS AND NOTICES

The Regulations place a duty on employers to ensure that safety signs are provided in circumstances where the risk to the health and safety of employees (identified through the risk assessment requirement contained in the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1992) cannot be entirely '*engineered*' or '*managed*' out of the workplace. Dependant upon the result of the assessment, signs will have to be provided to ensure that any remaining significant risk is apparent to the employees. It should be noted that the Regulations do not require safety signs to be used where there is no significant risk to the safety of employees.

Any required signs and notices must comply with requirements of the Regulations. The standards detailed in Parts 1 to 3 of BS 5499 "*Fire safety signs, notices and graphic symbols*", are accepted by this Authority as satisfying the requirements.

BS 5499: Part 4 provides guidance on the selection and use of escape route signs conforming to BS 5499: Part1. It gives advice on the use of the appropriate graphical symbol, the use of supplementary text to assist in the interpretation of signs and the use of arrows to provide additional information. The recommendations in the Code cover high mounted signs as specified in BS 5499: Part 1, low mounted way guidance systems are not covered but should conform to the requirements of BS 5266: Part 2 or Part 6.

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## **FIRE FIGHTING EQUIPMENT**

Whether this equipment requires to be identified by means of a sign will depend on the physical environment in which the above mentioned risk assessment takes place. In other words the features of the workplace, the activities carried out there and any other circumstances deemed to be pertinent must be taken into account.

In a building where the internal layout is such that the extinguishers provided are clearly visible to employees there should not be a requirement to further indicate the position of the fire fighting equipment.

In more complex building layouts, for example where it is not always possible to ensure that fire extinguishers are in the line of sight of employees, (e.g. due to the nature of the work process or where hose reels are installed within cabinets or where fire fighting equipment is contained within recessed '*fire points*'), then it would be pertinent to provide signs indicating the position of the equipment complete with directional arrows where applicable.

When the location fire fighting equipment provided is required to be indicated, it should be done by either using a suitable signboard or by colouring the background behind the equipment red. Where the equipment itself is predominantly red it may not be necessary to colour the background.

## **FIRE ALARMS**

Fire alarms are included in the Regulations insofar as they are an "*acoustic signal*". This includes both manual and electrically powered fire alarms.

The acoustic signal for a fire alarm should be:

- Louder than any ambient noise;
- Easily recognisable and distinct from any other noise or signal; and
- Continuous for evacuation

The fire alarm sound used should always be suitable for the circumstances in the premises concerned. Generally, fire alarms that comply with BS 5839: Part 1 will satisfy the requirements.

## **FURTHER INFORMATION**

The HSE has published a guide to the Regulations entitled "The Health and Safety (Safety Signs and Signals) Regulations 1996 - Guidance on Regulations", ISBN 0 7176 0870 0

HM Government has published a suite of 11 guides to accompany the Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005. These guides are designed for each type of occupancy. They can be obtained from The Stationary Office or downloaded from [www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk](http://www.firesafetyguides.communities.gov.uk)