



نظام الشارقة للسلامة والصحة المهنية
Occupational Safety & Health Sharjah

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هيئة الوقاية والسلامة
Government of Sharjah
Prevention & Safety Authority



Code of Practice Safety Signs and Signals OSHJ-CoP-35

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1 Introduction

Safety signage provides a specific message to the reader; they can warn of hazards, indicate mandatory actions, give the requirement for the use of specific personal protective equipment, prohibit actions or objects, signify health hazards, indicate the location of emergency and safety equipment and more. The different types of safety signage include:

- Prohibition;
- Warning;
- Mandatory;
- Emergency.

2 Purpose and Scope

This Code of Practice (CoP) has been developed to provide information to entities to assist them in complying with the requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health System in Sharjah.

This Code of Practice (CoP) defines the minimum acceptable requirements of the Occupational Safety and Health System in Sharjah, and entities can apply practices higher than, but not lower than those mentioned in this document, as they demonstrate the lowest acceptable level of compliance in the Emirate of Sharjah.

3 Definitions and Abbreviations

Entities:	Government Entities: Government departments, authorities or establishments and the like in the Emirate. Private Entities: Establishments, companies, enterprises and economic activities operating in the Emirate in general.
Risk:	Is the combination of likelihood of the hazard causing the loss and the severity of that loss (consequences).
Risk Assessment:	The systematic identification of workplace hazards and evaluation of the risks associated. This process takes existing control measures into account and identifies and recommends further control measures where required.
Hazard:	Anything that has the potential to cause harm or loss (injury, disease, ill-health, property damage etc).
Safety Signage:	Provides a specific message to those who may be exposed to hazards in the workplace.
Safety Signboard:	A sign which provides information or instructions which contains a combination of safety alert symbols, colour, pictograms and clear, concise signal words.
Prohibition Signage:	A sign prohibiting or forbidding behaviour likely to cause a risk to health and safety. Prohibition safety signs generally depicted a black safety symbol in a red circle with a diagonal cross through it.

Warning Signage:	A sign used to indicate the presence of hazards or hazardous materials. It is recognisable as a yellow triangle with a solid black border and a black pictogram on it.
Mandatory Signage:	A sign used to inform employees and others that actions must be taken to remain safe. They are recognisable by a white pictogram surrounded by a blue background.
Emergency Escape or First Aid Signage:	Provide information on emergency exits, first aid or rescue facilities. They are recognisable by a rectangular or square shape, and usually feature a white pictogram on a green background.
dB:	The decibel (dB) is a logarithmic unit used to measure sound level.

4 Roles and Responsibilities

4.1 Entity Responsibilities

- Identify areas where safety signage is required;
- Provide and maintain appropriate safety signage;
- Provide information, instructions, and where necessary training, on the meaning of safety signs;
- Provide specialist training to employees who direct others with the use of hand signals;
- Ensure the fire safety signage provided meets the requirements of the latest version of the UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice.

4.2 Employee Responsibilities

- Not endanger themselves or others;
- Follow precautionary control measures and ensure safety signs and signals relating to work activities are followed;
- Cooperate with the entity and receive safety information, instruction, supervision and training;
- Report any activity or defect relating to safety signs and signals which they know is likely to endanger the safety of themselves or that of any other person.

5 Requirements

In determining where and when to use safety signs, the entity should take into account any legal and industry requirements, as well as the results of risk assessments.

Safety signs are a form of control measures but are not a substitute for other means of controlling risks and are usually used in conjunction with other control measures.

5.1 Types of Safety Signage

A sign provides information or instructions by a combination of shape, colour and a symbol or pictogram which is rendered visible by lighting of sufficient intensity. In practice, many signs may be accompanied by supplementary text alongside the symbol of a moving person.

5.2 Safety Signboards

It may sometimes be useful to enhance a safety sign with text to aid understanding. This may be important when introducing a new or unfamiliar sign or using a general danger or warning sign. In these cases, the meaning is reinforced if the background colour of the safety signboard is the same as the colour used on the safety sign it is enhancing.



Table 1: Examples of Signboards

5.3 Safety Signs

Safety signs can be grouped under the following types:

Prohibition - to prohibit behaviour likely to increase or cause danger.	
Warning – to give warning of a hazard or danger.	
Mandatory - to prescribe a specific behaviour.	

Emergency Escape or First Aid Signage - provide information on emergency exits, first-aid or rescue facilities.

Table 2: Types of Safety Signs

Prohibition signs, intrinsic features:

- Round shape;
- Black pictogram on white background, red edging and diagonal line (the red part to take up at least 35% of the area of the sign).

Warning signs, intrinsic features:

- Triangular shape;
- Black pictogram on a yellow background with black edging (the yellow part to take up at least 50% of the area of the sign).

Mandatory signs, intrinsic features:

- Round shape;
- White pictogram on a blue background (the blue part to take up at least 50% of the area of the sign).

Emergency signs, intrinsic features:

- Rectangular or square shape;
- White pictogram on a green background (the green part to take up at least 50% of the area of the sign).

5.4 Safety Signage Colours

Colours indicate a specific meaning or purpose for employees and others to follow the information and instructions provided by the safety signage.

Colour	Meaning or Purpose	Instruction and Information
Red	Prohibition sign Danger alarm	Dangerous behaviour; stop; shutdown; emergency cut-out devices; evacuate etc.
Yellow or Amber	Warning sign	Be careful; take precautions; examine
Blue	Mandatory sign	Specific behaviour or action, for example, wear protective equipment
Green	Emergency escape First Aid sign No danger	Doors; exits; escape routes; equipment and facilities. Return to normal

Table 3: Safety Signage Colours

Fire safety signs provide information on fire-fighting equipment and procedures.





Colour	Meaning or Purpose	Instruction and Information
Red	Firefighting Equipment	Identification and location  
Green	Emergency Escape	Doors, exits and escape routes  

Table 4: Fire Signage Colours

Further information on fire safety signage can be found in the latest version of the UAE Fire and Life Safety Code of Practice.

5.5 Signs to Mark Obstacles and Dangerous Location

Places where there is a risk of colliding with obstacles, or of objects falling should be marked with alternating yellow and black, or red and white stripes. The yellow and black or red and white stripes must be at an angle of approximately 45 degrees and of more or less equal size. This is normally achieved by the use of suitable tapes.



Figure 1: Signs to Mark Obstacles and Dangerous Locations

5.6 Signs on Containers and Pipes

Containers, tanks and vessels used in the workplace to contain dangerous substances, and the visible pipes in the workplace containing or transporting hazardous substances, will in general need to have signs or labels fixed to them unless the risk is adequately controlled or not significant. Small storage areas of hazardous substances need to be similarly marked.

Signs or labels will be most useful at points where an employee is likely to be exposed to the contents of the pipework, such as sampling or filling points, drain valves, and flanged joints which are likely to need periodic breaking. Where there are long pipe runs on which points of potential exposure are infrequent, labels or signs may also be displayed at intermediate points.

5.7 Illuminated Signs

An illuminated sign is a sign made of transparent or translucent materials which is illuminated from the inside or the rear to give the appearance of a luminous surface.

The sign must be bright enough to be seen, without causing glare. Care is needed to ensure that numerous illuminated signs are not used together if this could give rise to confusion.

If an illuminated sign can either be on continuously or operate intermittently, for example, flash on and off, use the flashing sign to indicate a higher level of danger or a more urgent need for intervention or action. The duration of each flash and the frequency of the flashers of an intermittent illuminated sign must be such as to:

- Ensure the proper perception of the message, and
- Avoid any confusion with other illuminated signs, including continuous illuminated sign.

If a flashing sign is used instead of, or together with, an acoustic signal, it is important to synchronise the two. This means that the duration and frequency of flashes must be in line with both the pulse length and interval for an acoustic signal. The choice of equipment and the way it operates will of course need to take account of other risks.

Where flashing signs are used to warn of imminent danger, it is particularly important to ensure that measures are in place to either detect any failure of the sign quickly, or to prevent its failure.

5.8 Acoustic Signals

An acoustic signal is a sound signal which is transmitted without the use of a human or artificial voice. For an acoustic signal to be heard it should:

- Have a sound level which is considerably higher than the level of ambient noise, so that it is audible without being excessive or painful;
- Be easily recognizable, particularly in terms of pulse length and the interval between pulses or groups of pulses and be clearly distinct from any other acoustic signal and ambient noises.

Ensure that acoustic signals are not used more than one at a time. If a device can emit an acoustic signal at variable or constant frequencies, the variable frequency should be used to indicate a higher level of danger or a more urgent need for intervention or action. The signal for evacuation must be continuous.

5.9 Hand Signals

Hand signals are a movement or position of the hands to give information or instructions to people who are carrying out manoeuvres.

Hand signals can be used to direct hazardous operations, such as crane or vehicle manoeuvres. The signaller should ensure that:

- The signals are precise, simple, easy to make and to understand;
- The signaller and the operator/driver agree on the hand signals to be used before manoeuvres begin;
- The signaller shall be safely positioned to be able to see all the manoeuvres being made by the receiver of the hand signals;
- The signaller shall be dedicated to directing the manoeuvres and ensure the specific control measures in the area are implemented for employees safety working nearby;

- Where the operator/driver is unable to see the signaller, the manoeuvres shall be stopped until further instructions are received from the signaller.

Hand signals to be used can be found in **Appendix 1: Hand Signals to be Used.**

6 Training

The entity should provide employees with training in languages and in a format that employees understand, including but not limited to:

- The meaning of safety signage;
- Where training is required for employees to perform safety critical operations;
 - Hand signals;
 - Verbal communication.

Periodic refresher training should be conducted to ensure employees competency is maintained, including but not limited to:

- Where training certification has expired;
- Where identified as part of a training needs analysis;
- Where risk assessment findings identify training as a measure to control risks;
- Where there is a change in legal requirements;
- Where incident investigation findings recommend refresher training.

The entity must record and maintain accurate training records of OSH training provided to employees.

Further information on training can be found in OSHJ-GL-08: Training and Competence.

7 References

OSHJ-GL-08: Training and Competence

8 Document Amendment Record

TITLE	Safety Signs and Signals		
DOCUMENT AMENDMENT RECORD			
Version	Revision date	Amendment Details	Pages Affected
1	15 SEP 2021	New Document	N/A
2	03 JUL 2024	The document changed from a guideline to a code of practice. The document code was changed from OSHJ-GL-17 to OSHJ-CoP-35.	2,3,8,9
2	03 JUL 2024	Risk register Added	18
2	03 JUL 2024	Checklist Added	21

APPENDIX 1. Hand Signals to be Used.

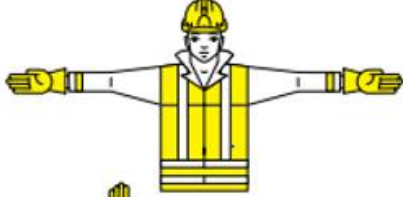


General Signals		
Meaning	Description	Illustration
<p>Start Attention Start of command</p>	Both arms are extended horizontally with the palms facing outwards.	
<p>Stop Interruption End of movement</p>	The right arm points upwards with the palm facing forwards.	
<p>End of the operation</p>	Both hands are clasped at chest height.	

Table 5: General Signals




Vertical Movements		
Meaning	Description	Illustration
Raise	The right arm points upwards with the palm facing forward and slowly makes a circle.	
Lower	The right arm points downwards with the palm facing inwards and slowly makes a circle.	
Vertical Distance	The hands indicate the relevant distance.	

Table 6: Vertical Movements

Horizontal Movements		
Meaning	Description	Illustration
Move forwards	Both arms are bent with the palms facing upwards and the forearms make slow movements towards the body.	
Move backwards	Both arms are bent with the palms facing downwards and the forearms make slow movements away from the body.	
Right to the signalman	The right arm is extended more or less horizontally with the palm facing downwards and slowly makes small movements to the right.	
Left to the signalman	The left arm is extended more or less horizontally with the palm facing downwards and slowly makes small movements to the left.	
Horizontal distance	The hands indicate the relevant distance.	

Table 7: Horizontal Movements


Danger		
Meaning	Description	Illustration
Danger Emergency stop	Both arms point upwards with the palms facing outwards.	
Quick	All movements faster.	
Slow	All movements slower.	

Table 8: Danger

APPENDIX 2. Risk Register

Some manuals within Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System include a sample risk register as an advisory document that entities can emulate. The examples listed in this sample may not be directly applicable to every entity; however, they serve as illustrative cases to enhance understanding of the methods used to evaluate activities within the entity, potential risks, and possible consequences. The sample demonstrates how to assess risks by calculating their likelihood and consequences.

Some manuals present this sample to emphasize the importance of risk monitoring, evaluation, and the implementation of appropriate control measures. It is unacceptable for an auditor from the Prevention and Safety Authority to find any entity engaging in hazardous activities without a thorough risk assessment process. We can anticipate and prevent workplace risks, and the risk monitoring process is not complex. Therefore, this appendix aims to provide a sample that aids in the monitoring, evaluation, and implementation of control measures, monitoring residual risks, and defining tasks and responsibilities for managing hazards.

Every government entity or private establishment has its unique nature of work and environment, which contain risks specific to its operations. Hence, each entity should develop its monitoring procedures based on this appendix. We can develop more detailed assessment tools beyond what this sample presents. As stipulated by Executive Council Resolution No. (15) of 2021 regarding the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System, employers are required to identify all foreseeable workplace hazards, assess the risk of injury or illness to workers, and implement consistent preventive measures to ensure workers' safety, health, and well-being. The same resolution also holds employers responsible for their employees, contractors, visitors, and anyone affected by the employer's activities. Therefore, this sample recommends including these individuals in the risk assessment process.

Activity/task	Dangers	Consequences	Existing control measures	Risk			Additional control measures	Residual risks			Executing person	Administrator: Date:
				L	C	R		L	C	R-R		
Installation of entrance and exit signs	Signs are unclear or improperly placed	Confusion and inability to locate emergency exits	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Install clear and visibly well-placed signs in strategic locations	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[Date]
Maintenance of entrance and exit signs	Signs are damaged or outdated	Misleading employees or visitors, delaying evacuation	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Perform regular inspections and maintenance to ensure signs are effective and clear	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[Date]
Assessment of sign locations	Changes in design or usage may render some signs inappropriate	Ineffective use of space, leading to delayed evacuation	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Conduct regular assessments of locations and update signs as needed	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[Date]
Training on orientation and evacuation	Employees are unaware of entrance and exit locations	Failure to execute evacuation procedures quickly and safely	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Provide regular training on evacuation procedures and how to follow the signs	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[Date]
Continuous updating of signs	New regulations or technology may require updates	Non-compliance with current regulations and safety standards	-	[1-5]	[1-5]	L x C	Monitor regulatory changes and continuously update signs accordingly	[1-5]	[1-5]	Existing control measures – risk (R) = residual risk (R-R)	-	[Date]

APPENDIX 3. Checklist

The checklist is used by Prevention and Safety Authority to monitor compliance levels during audit and inspection operations; it is not intended for use by government entities or private establishments.

Every code of practice or guideline published by the Prevention and Safety Authority within the Sharjah occupational safety and health system contains requirements that employers in the Emirate of Sharjah must comply with. Each manual includes an inspection checklist that summarizes the essential items used by the SPSA auditor to verify that government entities or private establishments comply with the manual's requirements. Auditors can add additional essential items as necessary. The inspection checklist also includes a manual reference for each essential item, as well as a sample of acceptable compliance evidence for each item. The SPSA's auditor may request additional compliance evidence based on the item's condition, as well as the severity and potential impact of non-compliance.

The SPSA's auditor uses the inspection checklist to provide a comprehensive report on the entity's status. We will use the same checklist to monitor manual standard violations. Non-compliance with these standards constitutes a violation of Executive Council Resolution No. 15 of 2021 regarding the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System. If the SPSA's auditor detects non-compliance, they can issue violations based on the approved violation list.

In this manual, the SPSA provides information and standards that employers conducting activities in the Emirate of Sharjah must adhere to. This is to ensure the safety of workers, property, and the environment. Adhering to the requirements of this manual helps improve the level of occupational safety and health at the workplace, and it shields private establishments from potential violations or financial penalties for non-compliance.

The Emirate of Sharjah's Executive Council Resolution stipulates that employers must exercise due diligence to ensure the safety and health of workers, contractors, visitors, and all those affected by the employer's activities. To avoid non-compliance, employers must ensure adherence to the Sharjah Occupational Safety and Health System requirements. Entities should develop their procedures and inspection checklists according to their activities, nature of work, and risk level.

Depending on recorded or reported incidents, and as necessary, the SPSA may amend the requirements in this manual. As a result, the attached inspection checklist may change. Occupational safety and health practitioners must stay up-to-date on published standards and any changes to the inspection checklist attached to each manual.

Audit/Inspection Checklist

Code Title	Safety Signs and Signals	Code No.	OSHJ-CoP-35	Rev. No.	2.0
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Sr.	Checklist Item	Clause in the Code	Acceptable means of compliance
1.	Is the signage provided where needed?	4.1: Entity Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Check for availability of signs, where necessary. – Check the condition of the signage.
2.	Are the signs provided, if any, meet the latest requirements?	4.1: Entity Responsibilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The signage provided must meet the latest version of UAE Fire and Life Safety CoP.
3.	Are the signs provided relevant to the work activities?	4.2, 5: Employee Responsibilities, Guidelines	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The type, color and shape of the signage used. – Results of risk assessment. – Time of the activities. – Location of the activates.
4.	Are the signs used visible?	5.2: Drivers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Signage should have sufficient intensity.
5.	Is the signboard provided?	5.3: Safety Signboards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A safety signboard including clear signs with text.
6.	Are signs provided for the dangerous locations?	5.5: Signs to Mark Obstacles and Dangerous Location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Places where there is a risk of colliding with obstacles, or of objects, falling should be marked with alternating yellow and black, or red and white stripes. – Signs on Containers and Pipes. – Illuminated Signs.