Using Color for Safety

A SAFETY TALK FOR
DISCUSSION LEADERS

This safety talk is designed for discussion leaders to use in preparing safety meetings.

Set a specific time and date for your safety meeting. Publicize your meeting so everyone involved will be sure to attend.

Review this safety talk before the meeting and become familiar with its content. Make notes about the points made in this talk that pertain to your workplace. You should be able to present the material in your own words and lead the discussion without reading it.

Seating space is not absolutely necessary, but arrangements should be made so that those attending can easily see and hear the presentation.

Collect whatever materials and props you will need ahead of time. Try to use equipment in your workplace to demonstrate your points.

DURING THE MEETING

Give the safety talk in your own words. Use the printed talk merely as a guide.

The purpose of a safety meeting is to initiate discussion of safety problems and provide solutions to those problems. Encourage employees to discuss hazards or potential hazards the encounter on the job. Ask them to suggest ways to improve safety in their area.

Don't let the meeting turn into a gripe session about unrelated topics. As discussion leader, its your job to make sure the topic is safety. Discussing other topics wastes time and can ruin the effectiveness of your safety meeting.

At the end of the meeting, ask employees to sign a sheet on the back of this talk as a record that they attended the safety meeting. Keep this talk on file for your records.

Using Color for Safety

Use of color-coding has a definite purpose. It is a preventive safety measure that uses seven basic colors to identify hazardous and emergency areas. These colors--red, orange, yellow, blue, green, purple, and black with white—work together with letters and symbols to make signs easily identifiable. Because the signs are placed in conspicuous areas where safety suggestions and instructions are necessary, the colors help attract attention.

Each color identifies particular parts of an area or equipment and works cohesively with symbols. It is important to be able to recognize the following:

- A red square symbol identifies fire hazards, protection equipment and apparatus, as well as danger signs and emergency stop controls on machines.

- An orange triangle or arrow is associated with dangerous equipment, which can injure a person by crushing, shocking or cutting.

- A yellow band, or black and yellow checkers or alternate stripes, signifies caution against getting struck by or caught in, on or between objects, or slipping, tripping, falling and stumbling.

- A blue circle is used to discourage use of material, or movement or starting of equipment by unqualified personnel.

- A green cross indicates the location of first-aid and safety equipment.

- A purple, or magenta against a yellow background, three-spot triangular design denotes nuclear radiation hazards, such as alpha, beta, gamma, neutron and X-rays.

- A black and white star identifies traffic patterns.

The use of color is also an integral part of dealing with compressed gas, because gases must be clearly marked to prevent accidental usage.

Specific gases intended for medical use for anesthetic, therapeutic or diagnostic purposes are prepared and packaged in cylinders marked with a definite color. The chemical or general name for the gas must also be lettered on the container.

The lettering must not be larger than 1/25 of the container's diameter, at least 1/8 of an inch high and appear at the valve of the cylinder, off the cylindrical part of the body.

These individual portable compressed gas cylinders are about 10 inches in diameter and 57 inches in length. Only the cylinders being used in medical facilities should be marked with a color that identifies the gas it contains.

The colors--green, gray, blue, orange, brown, red, black and yellow--should be of a non-fading, durable and readily soluble mixture. When two colors are used, they must both be visible from the top. Exact color shades are not necessary, although the hue and intensity should be distinguishable from another color.

Aside from the colors identifying medical uses, other colors can be painted on the containers for supplier identification or protection against corrosion.

Color-coding and design are also important in the identification of accident-prevention signs and tags. The use of opaque rather than glossy colors for signs is suggested.

Signs must be constructed so that they have rounded or blunt corners without any type of sharp projections. The written message should be positive, easy to read, concise and accurate.

Tags are used for temporary warning purposes. They are made of a temporary material and must be securely attached to the device.

- In areas where immediate danger exists and special precautions are necessary, use white danger signs with the word "danger" written in white on a red oval inside a black rectangular panel. Danger tags of the same design may also be used in areas only where the hazard is an immediate one.

- For warning against potential hazards and unsafe practices, employ yellow and black caution signs or tags.

- Place "slow-moving vehicle" signs, which must be in accordance with the American Society of Agricultural Engineers Emblem for Identifying Slow-Moving Vehicles, on vehicles moving 25 mph or slower on public roads. Such signs are triangular, with a fluorescent yellow-orange coloring and a dark-red reflective border.

- White tags, or fluorescent orange or orange-red symbol-color signs are used for biological hazards, which warn that infectious and potentially dangerous agents may be present.

These should be used in rooms or on containers, equipment, materials and experimental animals. Do not superimpose additional information on the signs, although pertinent information may be used in connection with the symbol.

- Blue informational signs are used for getting across particular messages such as "No Parking" and "Authorized Personnel Only," and for warnings like "Emergency Use Only."

- Exit signs shall have the word "EXIT" written legibly, no less than 6 inches high, on a white background, and must mark every door, passage or stairway.

- Two kinds of equipment tags include "DO NOT START" tags with white or gray lettering on a red background, and white "OUT OF ORDER" tags that have white lettering on a black rectangle.