

Fire escape signs - guidance on compliance

Document control information

Published document name:	escapesigns-gn.pdf
Date issued:	January 2012
Version:	1.1
Previous review dates:	March 2007
Next review date:	January 2014
Related documents:	Fire Safety Policy
Governing policy:	Fire Safety Policy
Guidance to policy:	
Legislation or related information:	Regulatory Reform (Fire Safety) Order 2005 Health and Safety Signs and Signals Regulations 1996
Document owner:	Fire Safety Adviser
Document approved by:	Director of Health and Safety
Lead contact:	Richard Norris

Contents

1. Scope	2
2. Introduction	2
3. Fire escape signs	3
3.1 Refuges for disabled people unable to escape unaided	5
3.2 Fire assembly point	5
3.3 Manual call points	6
3.4 Fire extinguishers	6
3.5 Signing the ideal escape route according to BS5499	7
3.6 The common sense approach to safety signs	9
3.7 Escape route signs (meaning and use of graphical symbol with directional arrow)	11

1. Scope

This guidance is intended to assist you when carrying out your Fire Risk Assessment (FRA) survey and shows what to look for with regard the style and content of fire escape signs, where they should be sited and things to consider with regard existing signs installed in your buildings, plus new signs you may need. We need our fire escape signs to be correct if we are to comply with current fire safety legislation.

2. Introduction

Fire escape signs are provided to guide you from wherever you are in a building, via a place of relative safety (the escape route) to the place of ultimate safety (the assembly area).

Fire escape signs are not needed on the main route into or out of a building (the one used by people for normal arrival and exit), but alternative escape routes and complicated escape routes do need to be signed. It must not be assumed that everyone will know all safe routes through the building. Similarly, it must not be assumed that, once outside the building via a final exit, people will know how to get to the assembly area, so signs directing to the assembly area will be needed as well.

3. Fire escape signs

Fire escape signs are green and white - safe condition. They must comprise a pictogram, an arrow, and possibly words. A sign with just an arrow, or just words, or an arrow and words is not sufficient. There must be a pictogram including the “rapidly walking man”. Signs to British Standard 5499: part 4:2000 have the man passing through a door. Another way to identify signs to BS5499 is that the text is in lower case apart from the first letter. Signs that are illuminated from behind or within (as in the case of an escape light with escape sign incorporated) will have a white figure entering a green door with a white surround.

You may encounter signs to European Standard 92/58/EEC. These are identified by all upper case text, a man, a door and an arrow. The Fire Safety Policy has stated escape signs in the University will be to BS5499 standard.

Example of old and new signs together.



Where possible, have old signs removed once the new one is installed to reduce the risk of confusion.



Current sign complies with BS5499 standard

The standard of fire escape signs within University premises varies greatly but much of it is out of date. There is much duplication (new signs put near old signs and the old signs left in place) and some of the signs are confusing. There are few locations where signs direct escapees from final exits to the assembly areas.

Some modern designs incorporate an escape sign and an emergency light. You may find in your area that a plastic sign has been stuck onto an emergency light. This is not a good idea as the sign will further reduce the illumination provided by the escape light – and the light levels from escape lights are low to begin with!

Please note that emergency escape lighting will not be covered in any detail in this guidance.

You may also find some escape signs with a fluorescent yellow background rather than a white one. Like high-visibility jerseys these signs are designed to glow in the dark and show up extremely well where escape lighting is poor or non-existent.

To complicate matters ...

There are also fire safety-related signs in blue and white (mandatory) and red, blue and white (informative):



Fire doors (see separate guidance) must have “Fire door keep shut” signs on both sides of the door. If a set of double doors, both doors should have signs on both sides. You will encounter Fire Door Keep Shut signs to older standards, possibly with the blue and white ones fitted as well.

Some fire doors will have automatic door closers fitted (connected to the fire alarm system) so the signs will say “Automatic fire door keep clear” or similar.

Fire doors to riser cupboards or other higher risk areas should have “Fire door keep locked” or similar signs fitted.



A Fire Action Notice located correctly adjacent a red manual call point. Two areas of the sign need to be completed by providing information on:

Line 2: Details of building address required

Line 7: Details of the assembly point location required.

NOTE: This is the minimum standard required to comply with legislation. You can improve on this, if you want, by placing a location map/floor plan alongside the Notice showing the route from that callpoint to the assembly area or final exit.



This version of the Fire Action Notice, common within the University, does not comply with current standards and must be replaced.

3.1 Refuges for disabled people unable to escape unaided

You will know about The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the steps the University is taking to make its buildings accessible. Current fire safety legislation explicitly states that people within a building who cannot escape unaided must be assisted from the building by people other than the Fire Brigade. Often this means assisting people out once the bulk of the evacuation has passed. Buildings therefore need to be equipped with safe refuges on all except the ground floor.



If you have refuges within your building they must be appropriately signed. They must also be equipped with a means of communication so a control point can be advised the refuge is occupied.

If the refuge is in an area off the escape route, or if the route is complicated or long, direction signs may be needed as well



3.2 Fire assembly point

As mentioned earlier, if the assembly point is not visible from a final exit, signs need to be provided directing people to it. Once in the vicinity of the assembly point it needs to be identified. Examples of suitable signs are shown here. They should be mounted at a height that they can be seen if people are already congregating, i.e. above head height.



3.3 Manual call points

You may encounter “manual call points” (break-glass boxes) in different colours.

The fire alarm ones will always be red. You may have a problem with malicious activation in your building in which case there could be a plastic cover over the callpoint to make “accidental” operation more difficult.

Green ones tend to be located by security doors and activate a manual override of the security system to allow the doors to be opened. (It is not always desirable to have security doors failing to safety for obvious reasons!)

Blue or cream ones can be used to control other apparatus including smoke extraction or air-conditioning. We are not interested in them apart from knowing they are there.

Fire alarm manual call points should be located by the door from a floor (storey exit) and by the doors from the building (final exit). There may be others installed part-way along long corridors.

3.4 Fire extinguishers

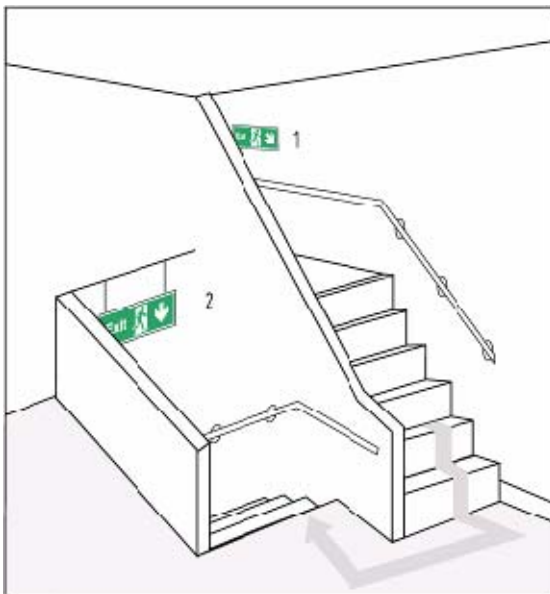
Portable fire extinguishers (PFE) are provided to comply with legislation to aid our escape. It is not provided to fight a fire until the Fire Brigade arrives. In University premises it will be found adjacent storey exits but could also be located elsewhere on the floor depending on the floor size and any specific fire risks on that floor.

“Fire points” are created by storey exits and comprise a manual callpoint, Fire action notice and PFE.

The location of PFE does not need to be signed unless it is out of sight, say around a corner. In cases like this a suitable sign needs to be placed on the escape route or in a prominent position indicating where the PFE is.

3.5 Signing the ideal escape route according to BS5499

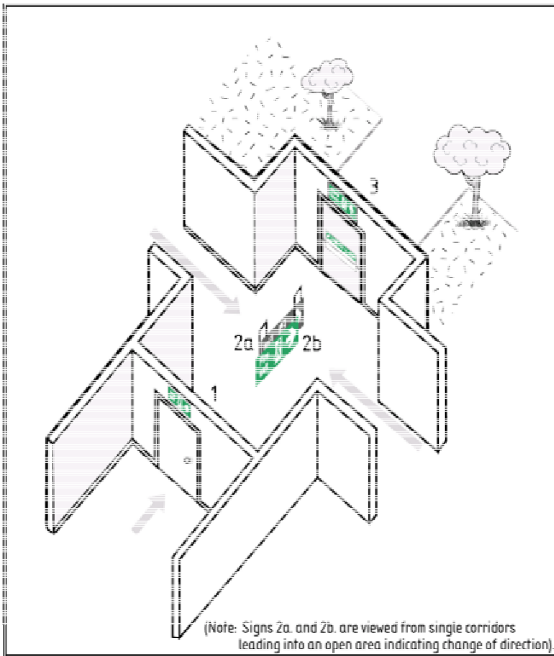
As a way of illustrating what has been written above, this section will show examples of where escape signs should be fitted. At the end of the briefing is an explanation of the different signs and their meaning.



Example 1:

Sign 1 means progress down to the right as viewed from in front of the sign. Sign sited on wall of half landing.

Sign 2. Progress down from here as viewed from in front of the sign. Suspended from the ceiling (could be mounted on the wall above the stair head)



Example 2:

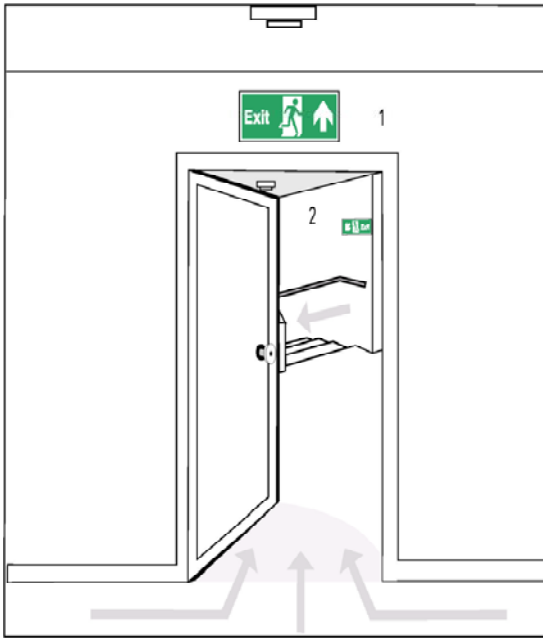
Sign 1: Progress forward and through from here as viewed from in front of the sign. Positioned above door.

Signs 2a and 2b: Progress to the left or right from here. Suspended at change of direction.

Sign 3: Progress forward and through from here as viewed from in front of the sign. Positioned above door.

NOTE: Outside the final exit (sign 3 above it) if the door can be obstructed a “Fire exit keep clear” sign is needed on the outside of the door.

Possibly bollards and or yellow hatching paint may also be needed.



Example 3:

Sign 1: Progress forward and through from here as viewed from in front of the sign.
Positioned above door.

Sign 2: Progress down to the left from here as viewed from in front of the sign.
Positioned on the landing.

3.6 The common sense approach to safety signs

When you survey your buildings you will probably find many out of date signs, there will be signs missing, or they do not give a clear message, e.g. many signs have been installed above a door with the direction arrow pointing down rather than up when the sign means straight ahead.

Technically this is incorrect but, unless we want departments to spend lots of money replacing lots of signs and redecorating, I believe we need to take the view that as long as the meaning is clear, why replace a sign because the arrow is pointing the wrong way?

However, we do need to

- Remove word-only or arrow-only signs with new ones.
- Replace the old orange Fire action notices with current ones.
- Make sure all fire doors are fitted with Fire door keep shut signs.

Hopefully this guidance will help you identify what needs to be done in your building. If you need advice or guidance get in touch with the Fire Safety Adviser.

Where you identify a new sign is needed, you will need to put a job on the Maintenance Services helpdesk by calling 89898 and reporting the problem.

Richard Norris

Senior Health and Safety Adviser (Fire Safety)

University of Bristol






Health and Safety Office




Richard.Norris@bristol.ac.uk

Tel: 0117 9288784

Mob: 07786 397655

3.7 Escape route signs (meaning and use of graphical symbol with directional arrow)

Sign	Meaning as viewed from in front of the sign	Examples of locations
	<p>Progress down to the right (indicating change of level).</p>	<p>On wall or suspended at head of stairs or ramp. On half-landing wall or stairs Suspended at change of level</p>
	<p>Progress up to the right (indicating change of level). Progress forward and across to the right from here when suspended within an open area.</p>	<p>On half landing wall or stairs. Suspended at change of level. Suspended in open areas.</p>
	<p>Progress down to the left. (indicating change of level).</p>	<p>On wall or suspended at head of stairs or ramp. On half landing wall or stairs. Suspended at change of level.</p>
	<p>Progress up to the left (indicating change of level). Progress forward and across to the left from here when suspended within an open area.</p>	<p>On wall or suspended at foot of stairs or ramp. On half landing wall or stairs. Suspended at change of level. Suspended in open areas.</p>
	<p>Progress forward from here (indicating direction of travel). Progress forward and through from here; when sign is sited above a door</p>	<p>Suspended in corridor leading to door. Suspended in open areas. Suspended in front of door.</p>

	(indicating direction of travel). Progress forward and up from here (indicating change of level)	Positioned above door. Suspended at foot of stairs or ramp.
	Progress to the right from here (indicating direction of travel).	On corridor walls. Suspended adjacent and left of the exit. Suspended at change of direction.
	Progress to the left from here (indicating direction of travel).	On corridor walls. Suspended adjacent and right of exit. Suspended at change of direction.
	Progress down from here (indicating change of level).	Suspended at head of stairs or ramp. Suspended at change of level.