Australasian Health Facility Guidelines

Part C - Design for Access, Mobility, OHS and Security

C.0005 - Signage

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Australasian Health Facility Guidelines

Address: PO Box 1060, North Sydney NSW 2059
Website: http://www.healthfacilityguidelines.com.au
Email: webmaster@healthfacilityguidelines.com.au

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05 SIGNAGE

05.01 General

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

Provide appropriate and comprehensive wayfinding for all healthcare facilities. Signage should clearly identify staff, patient and visitor areas and clearly identify restricted areas.

Comply with the requirements of the BCA and DDA, and with all relevant legislation, regulations, codes and policies including those within each jurisdiction. Comply with the requirements for relevant Statutory Authorities e.g. roads, aviation, local authorities, utility providers, etc.

Comply with the relevant security acts and regulations within each jurisdiction, and all policies governing the function and use of healthcare facilities e.g. access, safety, processes, building services / components and maintenance.

Design wayfinding to assist and enable patients and visitors to navigate around the facility with ease, and adequately address the needs of persons with disabilities.

Wayfinding develops and expands upon previous concepts of providing signage. Corporate identity requirements may in turn have an impact on the wayfinding strategy employed.

Wayfinding and corporate identity have become highly specialized subjects. Any system developed or adopted should be evidence based. At site level an approved documented system is essential and a method of developing a comprehensive strategy should be followed rather than the use of a prescriptive signage manual.

This section provides general guidance where no comprehensive wayfinding policy or guideline exists. However, in such cases, it is recommended that a policy be developed with specialist assistance.

Signage should be used to define those areas where public access is allowed or restricted, providing a first line of defence against intruders.

TYPEFACE

The Helvetica typeface has been in general use for public and healthcare signage since the 1970's, with sign making and engraving equipment set up for this typeface. It was adopted by the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK and by NSW Health in the TS-2 signposting guide in 1974 (NSW Health & CHAA 2009).

The introduction of CAD and CAD/CAM expanded the choice of typeface and materials. A sans serif lettering style is still recommended for general healthcare signage. Frutiger Bold provides improved recognition and comprehension to Helvetica Medium, and there are other alternatives such as Meta and Arial.

The use of Title case or Capitalized text - upper case for the first letter and lower case for the rest of the word - is recommended for legibility and for general signage, while upper case is recommended for the Main Entry sign.

Note: The BCA, some Australian Standards and other regulatory signage may require or recommend the use of Helvetica as a typeface.

PICTOGRAMS

Pictograms aid comprehension, help overcome language difficulties and provide a means to rapidly identify services.

Australian and International Standards symbols or pictograms should generally be used in preference to custom designs to avoid ambiguity. The use of accompanying text with pictograms aids comprehension and is often required.

Refer to:

AS1428: Design for access and mobility, parts 1 and 2 (Stds Aust 2010).

ISO 7001: Graphical symbols - Public information symbols (ISO 2007).

Size of letters in relation to reading distances, mounting heights, etc, should comply with the relevant signage standards and include Braille and tactile requirements.

Compliance with the intent of the DDA requires consideration of lighting, lettering and symbol size, tactile, auditory and visual safety information. Ensure that signs do not reflect light and are not affected by glare e.g. in front of bright backgrounds.

SIGNAGE MATERIALS

Selection will be influenced by a number of factors including fitness for purpose, life cycle costs and flexibility requirements.

Many of the traditional signage systems employed powder-coated aluminium planking with screen-printed lettering. New products and processes now offer greater design flexibility and more cost effective solutions.

Vinyl-cut self-adhesive lettering has proved to be a practical and economical option for internal and external signage, and can be changed easily over time. However it is vulnerable to vandalism in public areas and removal can damage some surfaces.

The use of direct stick lettering on door surfaces should be assessed against the difficulty in repainting and the incurred cost penalty. Signs using removable slats may require a locking device to prevent unauthorized removal.

Acrylic, synthetic and composite boards are increasingly used, as is computerized laser cutting of most materials. Sandblasting, in lieu of engraving, is now common and older machinery with limited fonts / pictograms is being replaced by more versatile modern equipment.

05.02 External Signs

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

HELIPADS

Ensure that the marking and signage for Helicopter Landing Areas complies with the requirements of the Regulating Authority.

Refer to:

CAAP 92-2 (1) - Guidelines for the establishment and use of helicopter landing sites (Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia 1996).

DHS Victoria - Capital Development Guidelines. 6.7: Air Ambulance Helipads (DHS Victoria 2003).

CASR 133 - Commercial Air Transport Operations - Rotorcraft (Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia 2000).

GENERAL

External directional signs should have reflective letters on a contrasting background. A gloss finish that reflects light may be difficult to read. The signs should preferably be steel or aluminium construction with a durable finish.

EXTERNAL ILLUMINATED SIGNS

External illuminated signs are used for Emergency Department, the Main Entry and Night Entry.

Note: Emergency Department or Emergency Unit is referred to in these guidelines. The sign however should read ‘EMERGENCY’.

ROAD MARKINGS

Road markings such as parking bays, arrows, symbols and instructions should follow the relevant Road Authority policies and applicable Australian Standards. Refer to AS 2890: Parking facilities, parts 1 and 6 (Stds Aust 2009c).

ROAD SIGNS

Accreditation standards may require that the facility has directional road signs sufficient to enable it to be easily located from the major access roads in the area.

The entry to the Emergency Unit should be clearly signposted by an illuminated sign that is visible from the main entry points to the Hospital site.

For ease of comprehension, all on-site road signage should continue the use of public road signage that complies with the requirements of the local council and/or the roads and traffic authority for each jurisdiction.

05.03 Internal Signs

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

Comply with the relevant Acts, regulations and policies of the authorities for safety symbols and symbolic signs including all referenced Australian Standards, Occupational Health and Safety and Disability Discrimination requirements, and the policies within each jurisdiction.

BED NUMBERING

Bed numbering should be shown outside the patient bedroom with one number per bed.

In bedrooms with more than one bed, all bed numbers or the range of numbers should be shown on the sign outside the room. For example:

- beds 78 & 79; or
- beds 78 to 81.

In bedrooms with more than one bed, display the bed number at the bedhead.

Bed numbers outside the room should be clearly visible from the corridor and not be obscured by other objects or wall returns.

The provision of a room number is optional. When provided it should not visually compete with the bed numbers.

PATIENT INFORMATION

It is no longer recommended that signs display information about a patient such as patient details, doctor identification and special instructions at the patient bedhead or in a visible place within the patient bedroom.

This is considered inappropriate due to the requirement for the privacy of patient records. Designers and managers wishing to install patient information holders in the rooms are advised to fully consider the impact on patient privacy.

DOOR IDENTIFICATION

Door / frame numbering or tags may be required as part of an asset management and maintenance system / register. This constitutes a separate labelling system and should not be confused with standard room signage. Unlike room signs, door labels are generally small, unobtrusive and may use a simple bar code.

IDENTIFICATION SIGNAGE

Identification signs located on doors or preferably on walls adjacent to doors require the following considerations:

- the format used should allow easy replacement of the sign or sign message when the room function changes; and
- it may be appropriate to deliberately omit identification on certain doors used only by staff.

DIRECTIONAL SIGNAGE

Non-illuminated directional and area identification signs should be as follows:

- ceiling or wall mounted;
- text on contrasting background - dark lettering on light background preferred;
- a guide for the patient or visitor until they reach a room or door sign for the intended destination; and
- not obscure other critical ceiling fixtures such as emergency lighting or fire exit signs.

Serious consideration should be given to the provision of alternative / additional low level signs in Braille in hospital entrance foyers leading to major departments and lifts. Although this is not a mandatory requirement, it may become a requirement of the Disability Discrimination Act (Commonwealth of Australia 1992) in the future. It is recommended that such signs be installed immediately above the handrail required by AS1428: Design for access and mobility (Stds Aust 2010).

05.04 Fire Services Signs

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS

Install fire services and exit signs in accordance with the following as applicable:

- Building Code of Australia (Australian Building Codes Board 2009).
- AS2444: Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets - Selection and location, SAI Global (Stds Aust 2001).
- AS2293.3: Emergency escape lighting and exit signs for buildings, SAI Global (Stds Aust 2005a).
- AS2419.1: Fire hydrant installations - System design, installation and commissioning, SAI Global (Stds Aust 2005b).
- AS2441: Installation of fire hose reels, SAI Global (Stds Aust 2005c).

Note: Cantilevered wall signs in preference to wall or ceiling signs are recommended for the ready identification of Fire Service equipment under emergency conditions.

05.05 Miscellaneous Signs

GENERAL

Miscellaneous signs, illuminated and non-illuminated, are to be provided as required. The signs and colours used should meet the requirements of the relevant legislation, regulations and standards.

Refer to Part B for signs, symbols or marking required for individual HPU including security, hazard and safety signage.

In addressing specific location requirements, multi lingual signs and symbols should also comply with relevant disability discrimination and associated regulations and policies.

Signage identifying the presence of CCTV monitoring is recommended in public areas as a deterrent to antisocial, violent or criminal activities. Refer to Section790 - Security.

05.06 References

Individual Jurisdictions

NSW

NSW Health & CHAA, UNSW, 2009, TS-2: Wayfinding for Health Facilities, NSW Health.

Queensland

Wayfinding design guidelines, CRC for Construction Innovation, compiled by Apelt, R., Crawford, J., Hogan, D, n.d., 18 May 2010, supported by Queensland Government Disability Services, http://www.construction-innovation.info/index.php?id=1097

Victoria

DHS Victoria 2003, Capital development guidelines 6.7: Air Ambulance Helipads, Department of Human Services, Victoria.

Further Reading

Australian Building Codes Board 2009, The Building Code of Australia, Australian Government, State and Territory Governments of Australia.

Barker, P & Fraser, J 2000, Sign Design Guide, JMU Access Partnership and Sign Design Society, London.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia 1996, CAAP 92-2: Guidelines for the establishment and use of helicopter landing sites, Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia.

Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia 2000, CASR 133: Commercial Air Transport Operations - Rotorcraft, Civil Aviation Safety Authority Australia.

Commonwealth of Australia 1992, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Office of Legislative Drafting and Publishing, Canberra.

ISO 7010 2003, Graphical symbols - Safety colours and safety signs - Safety signs used in workplaces and public areas, International Organisation for Standardisation.

ISO 7001 2007, Graphical symbols - Public information symbols, International Organisation for Standardisation.

Miller, C, et al. 1999, Wayfinding: Effective Wayfinding and Signing Systems; Guidance for Healthcare Facilities, The Stationary Office, London.

Stds Aust 2001, AS 2444: Portable fire extinguishers and fire blankets - Selection and location, SAI Global.

Stds Aust 2005a, AS2293.3: Emergency escape lighting and exit signs for buildings, SAI Global.

Stds Aust 2005b, AS2419.1: Fire hydrant installations - System design, installation and commissioning, SAI Global.

Stds Aust 2005c, AS2441: Installation of fire hose reels, SAI Global.

Stds Aust 2009c, AS/NZS 2890 (Set): Parking facilities, SAI Global.

Stds Aust 2010, AS1428 (set): Design for Access and Mobility, SAI Global.

Uebele, A 2007, Signage Systems and Information Graphics, Thames & Hudson, New York.