Clarion®

Reducing Risk, Protecting People

ISSUE:

OSHA Update of Consensus Standards for Signage

Summary:

The U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) current regulations for workplace safety signs are based on outdated formats. These old formats are not aligned with the latest safety communication standards and their state-of-the-art warnings technology. OSHA's sign and tag regulations have not been updated since their inception in 1971, which reference the 1967 and 1968 versions of the United States of America Standards Institute (USASI) Z53 and Z35 standards.

OSHA's 2013 regulatory agenda includes an anticipated update to modernize its safety sign and tag regulations. The proposed new rule will update OSHA's regulations to incorporate the latest, 2011, versions of the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) Z535 standards. Because OSHA must be sensitive to imposing additional costs on facility owners, the ANSI Z535-2011 references will appear next to the 1967 USASI Z53 and 1968 USASI Z35 standards currently referenced in OSHA's regulations. For new signage, OSHA will allow use of safety signs and tags that are compliant with either the old or new USASI/ANSI standards. For existing signage, OSHA will grandfather signs that comply with its current requirements. OSHA expects to commence rulemaking to effect its regulation change shortly.

The objective of OSHA's update is to advance workplace safety by allowing employers to use the latest ANSI Z535 standards for signage, taking advantage of the improved safety communication technology of the newer standards.

Old

DANGER

HIGH VOLTAGE

DANGER

HIGH VOLTAGE

New

⚠ **DANGER**

Hazardous voltage.

Contact will cause electric shock or burn.

Follow lockout procedure before servicing this equipment.

⚠ DANGER

Electrocution hazard. Do NOT operate. This equipment is locked out!

Signal word panels identify the hazard severity level.

Word messages identify the hazard, the consequence of interaction with the hazard and how to avoid the hazard.

Graphical symbols increase noticeability and comprehension of the safety message.

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Background:

Clarion's CEO, Geoffrey Peckham, who also serves as chair of the ANSI Z535 Committee for Safety Signs and Colors and chair and delegation head for ANSI to the ISO standards pertaining to safety signs, has led a four-year effort to update OSHA's consensus standards. His goal has been to better align OSHA with the latest advances in safety sign technology. Together with the National Electrical Manufacturers Association, Peckham has lobbied OSHA to recognize that the ANSI Z535 series of standards for safety colors, signs and tags provide a greater level of safety as compared to the 1967-1968 USASI Z53 and Z35 standards presently referenced in OSHA's regulations.

Importance:

The objective of OSHA's update is to advance workplace safety by allowing employers to use the latest ANSI Z535 standards for signage and tags. Signs and tags that are intelligently designed to meet the 2011 ANSI Z535 standards:

- Provide the information viewers need to make safe decisions, such as the nature of the hazard, the consequence of interaction with the hazard, and how to avoid the hazard

- Embody human factors research on effective warnings and modern risk assessment methodologies

- Communicate safety to non-English speaking workers with multiple languages and graphical symbol panels

- Meet current legal criteria for "adequate warnings" as defined by the past thirty years of U.S. case law

OSHA does allow the use of the current ANSI Z535 standards because they share the same basis document as the present OSHA regulations. However, facility owners using ANSI Z535 signs or tags run the risk of being cited for violating OSHA standards because the OSHA standards only reference the old 1967-1968 standards (called a "de minimus situation"). The proposed new rule will allow for the use of the latest ANSI Z535 signage without the barrier of a de minimus citation.

Position:

Clarion supports OSHA's adoption of the ANSI Z535 series of standards. OSHA's commitment to embrace the advances that have taken place in safety sign technology is a step forward in improving safety, reducing compliance uncertainty, and better protecting workers of all backgrounds. Furthermore, this is an opportunity for safety professionals to rethink and elevate visual safety communication in the workplace. Organizations can now utilize the advances in warnings technology established in the latest ANSI Z535 standards for facility signs and tags — and be in compliance with OSHA. The goal: to more effectively reduce risk and protect people's lives with best practice facility safety signs and tags.

Contact Clarion for additional information on safety sign standards and best practices.

Clarion Safety Systems, LLC, is the leading designer and manufacturer of visual safety solutions that help customers in more than 180 industries worldwide to make their products and premises safer. Clarion offers a full range of standard and custom products including machinery safety labels, environmental and facility safety signs, pipe and valve identification markings, lockout/tagout products, and safety-grade photoluminescent egress path-marking escape systems. Founded in 1990, the company continues to play a leading role in the development and writing of international and national standards for safety signs, labels, and markings. **To learn more about Clarion Safety Systems, please visit www.clarionsafety.com.**

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