



US Army Corps  
of Engineers®

# The Sign Post

A newsletter for the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers Sign Program  
Summer 2010 Edition

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## Welcome to The Sign Post.

By Rick Magee, National Sign Program Manager

The Sign Post has received compliments from you, our reader. And, even better, readers have sent in photos, ideas for topics, and the occasional article. Thank you for reading The Sign Post and for your contributions.

This edition contains a summary of the results of the recent number crunching regarding identification signs, changes regarding interior sign standards, an unsolicited recommendation of a commercial source for sign hardware, a guide to determining if your signs are compliant, bilingual signage, and some of our usual features. I hope you find it useful.

## Survey of Standard Identification Signs

This spring districts were surveyed for the numbers of compliant and non-compliant standard identification signs they have. A total of 2810 signs were reported nation-wide, of which 2543 were “compliant”. This is a compliance rate of 90.5%.



Compliant STANID signs with a consistent and correct Corps Communication Mark enhance the brand image of our agency. MG Riley signed a policy letter on 14 August 2008 regarding the Corps Communication Mark or logo on signs. Part of that policy was a directive to Commanders to replace all non-compliant identification signs by the end of the 2008 calendar year. These signs should have been compliant by 1998. Construction ID signs are included in the directive.

While there has been some improvement in the rate of compliance, there are many signs that still require replacement. District and project sign managers are strongly encouraged to inventory all their identification signs in Corps SignPro. Be sure the correct sign status is indicated on the sign overview page and be sure to save the page before moving on. Accurate and up-to-date sign inventories in SignPro will make getting these numbers much easier for all in the future.

### Interior Office Safety Signs

Having proper signs in the event of an emergency could save lives. Signs for exits meet certain criteria allowing people to instantly recognize them. Unfortunately, the emergency exit and fire extinguisher signs shown on page 18.18 of the USACE Sign Standards Manual do not conform to those standards. The Sign Advisory Work Group has voted that page 18.18 regarding safety related interior signs will be changed with the next revision of the Sign Manual. In the meantime, do not use the two signs shown on the right. Neither sign is in compliance with the National Fire Prevention Association or other pertinent codes.



For standards regarding EXIT or fire and emergency signs, see table 8-1 on page 159 of the USACE Safety Manual, EM385-1-1. Exit signs should be "lettered in legible letters, not less than 6 [inches] (15.2 cm) high on white field. The principal stroke of letters shall be at least 3/4 inch (5.1 cm) in width."

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### Sign Maintenance Corner

by Bob Ojala, Chicago District

I thought you would like to hear that I have had a GREAT experience with Paul Cormier, one of the speakers at the National Sign Managers Meeting. He sells the SignGuardian™ system for fence signs (which I have purchased).

I called Paul and asked if he had Vandal-Resistant bolts and nuts that would fit the UNICOR Steel Post & Aluminum sign system. He thought the 1-Way bolts on their price list would work, but they were too short, and they had no Vandal-Proof nuts (those are typically used on traffic signs).

He said he'd look around, but I told him that our order would be very small, and not worth his effort. He really has a "want to please" attitude, and even for a small, \$400 order, he has spent a lot of time & effort to solve my problem. (I'm sure he hopes to sell more if he can.)

He first sent me several samples of nuts, bolts, and necessary tools, and kept looking until we found a very good solution, with a totally vandal-proof bolt (different from his stock bolts) and several choices of nuts that are resistant, if not fully vandal-proof.

If any of the sign managers have a mounting hardware need or a problem to solve, I cannot speak highly enough about Paul Cormier, P&C Tech Products, & SignGuardian™!

His contact info is: Paul Cormier, P&C Tech Products, Inc., PO Box 805, Sterling, MA 01564  
C # 978.479.0022 (866) 365-0167 (facsimile)

<http://www.signguardian.com/> or <http://www.pandctechproducts.com/>



Sign Guardian clips to attach sign to chain link fence.

## Sign Compliance Guide – A Dichotomous Key by Jeff Mangum

### 1. Does sign contain the words Caution, Warning or Danger, or identify a safety hazard?

- a. YES. Is it HQ approved? (Approved messages are in the Manual, SignPro, or Gateway)
  - i. YES. **Compliant**.
  - ii. NO. **Non-compliant**. Replace with an approved safety sign. If none meet the need, submit a request for approval to the MCX (See manual page 1-13).
- b. NO. Go to Step 2.

### 2. Is sign exactly as shown in the manual or SignPro Catalog?

- a. YES. **Compliant**. Ensure the sign is appropriate for application and sized right for viewing distance (page 2-6). Ensure roadway directional and water-viewed signs use Helvetica Medium. Ensure mounting follows guidelines if possible.

#### b. NO. Are the layout, color, font, and symbol correct?

- **Layout** means the sign follows a sign type grid in the manual. All sign types are listed on page 1-9 of the Sign Standards Manual.
- **Colors** are as shown in Chapter 4 and should follow sign type examples.
- **Font** is Helvetica Bold for most signs except Helvetica Medium for roadway directional and water-viewed signs.
- **Symbols** are shown in Chapter 8; additional HQ-approved symbols not in the Manual are listed on the Gateway and included in SignPro.
  - i. YES. **Compliant with District Sign Manager (DSM) approval**.  
Ensure legend is appropriate, concise, easy to understand, and legible.
  - ii. NO.
    1. Is it an interpretive sign?
      - a. YES. **Compliant with DSM approval**. Ensure it follows Chapter 13 principles and does not circumvent requirements for safety signs.
      - b. NO. Go to Step 2.
    2. Is it an off-project sign?
      - a. YES. Are Corps standards allowed?
        - i. YES. **Non-compliant**. Use Corps standards.
        - ii. NO. Cooperate with state or local authority to meet their requirements. **Compliant with DSM approval**. Document in Project Sign Plan.
      - b. NO. Go to Step 3.
    3. Is it an MUTCD sign?
      - a. YES. Is it a Directional, Symbol or Parking Sign?
        - i. YES. **Non-compliant**. Use Corps standards.
        - ii. NO. **Compliant with DSM approval**.
      - b. NO. Go to Step 4.
    4. Is there any other justified reason for not meeting layout, color, font, and symbol?
      - a. YES. **Compliant with DSM approval**. Project should document justification in Sign Plan.
      - b. NO. **Non-compliant**.

Questions about this page?

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*In SignPro, “non-compliant” status indicates a non-approved sign that should be replaced.*

## A Tale of Two Languages – Bilingual Signage

It was the best of times; it was the worst of times. The park ranger was patrolling the beach, but it sounded like the Beach of Babel. Sometimes signs in English are just not adequate to get a message to your visitors. District Sign Program Managers have the authority to approve signs in languages other than English.



Beach rules sign in Saudi Arabia.  
Photo by Scott Mayo, former park ranger at Beech Fork Lake, LRH, now with Saudi Aramco.

### Third, how are the signs arranged?

- If symbol signs will work, use them.
- Keep text to a minimum, short and sweet.
- For text signs, use one of the custom grids.
- Approved safety critical sign messages may be carefully translated without further HQ approval.
- Use two panels arranged side by side, one in English the other in the other language.

There is more information on non-English signs on the Gateway at

<http://corpslakes.usace.army.mil/employees/sign/bilingual.cfm>

Multilingual sign at hospital.  
Photo by Betsy Magee

Before ordering bilingual signs, there are some things to think about. **First, know your audience:**

- What languages do your visitors read?
- Have you a significant number of visitors that can read a language other than English better than they can read English?
- Does your target audience read a dialect different from the standard language? For example, Castellan Spanish differs from Mexican Spanish differs from Puerto Rican.
- Will your visitors understand your message in symbol signs?

### Second, what is your message?

- Can you use symbol signs?
- Have you someone locally who can translate the text to the target language?
- Have the message reviewed by others to ensure the intended message is successfully given.



**The Sign Post Interview: Kim Rea of the Sign Advisory Work Group**

Kimberly Rea is the Sign Advisory Work Group representative from the Mississippi Valley Division. She has graciously responded to the infamous *Sign Post* interview.

*Sign Post* -- How long have you been with the Corps?

*Kim* -11 years and 10 months.

*Sign Post* - Have you any other Government service?

*Kim* - In college I did surveys for the U.S. Forest Service and I did a fire detail in Colorado with the Forest Service. I have also worked in municipal parks and Arkansas State Parks.

*Sign Post* - What is special about where you work?

*Kim* - I work at the Rivers Project Office on the Mississippi River just 20 minutes north of St. Louis. Two of the most special things about my location: our office sits between the confluences of the Missouri, Illinois, and Mississippi Rivers. The Illinois River flows in about 18 miles upstream of our office and the Missouri River flows in about four miles downstream. Our office is also located in the middle of the Riverlands Migratory Bird Sanctuary which has been designated an Important Bird Area by National Audubon.



*Sign Post* - What is your favorite memory working for the Corps?

*Kim* - Working as a co-op at Mountain Home on Norfork and Bull Shoals Lakes. [Located in Little Rock District, Arkansas.] I learned a lot there and I fell in love with the area and the people. Lots of funny things happened there. I fell in the lake at the boat ramp in front of visitors and my inflatable life jacket inflated in 3 feet of water...Then there was the time on 4<sup>th</sup> of July weekend that a diver found a homemade fishing "bomb" at the bottom of the lake. I had forgot my sunscreen and the hour patrol of the lake turned into something like 8 or 10 hours and I was a baked lobster by the time we made it off the water.

*Sign Post* - How long have you been involved in the sign program?

*Kim* - I have been involved at some capacity with signs since I started as a co-op in May 1997. The most fun I have had with signs has been working with the Work Group and trying to make things better for all the field folks. Being a champion for the field and what is needed makes me proud.

**Sign Post** - How much do you love the sign manual?

*Kim* - It keeps getting better! Making revisions that make it more useful and easier to use helps when encouraging people to use it!

**Sign Post** - What is the funniest or most original sign you have seen?

*Kim* - The one that sticks out in my mind...when I first moved here in 2002 and was driving along the river there was a home made beautifully painted sign with a boat driving through flooded streets among buildings with the words, "It's called a flood-plain because it's plain that it floods". In the St. Louis Metro area folks continue to build subdivisions, businesses, etc. in the flood plain and then complain when the river rises and floods them out...for me the sign just spoke volumes.

**Sign Post** - What does, or could, SAWG stand for and do?

*Kim* - Sagacious and Witty Guys/Gals (I dabbled in the thesaurus!!!) The SAWG works to provide guidance to help keep our messaging uniform and to insure that random signs don't just pop up all over the place. With signs less is more and I think the SAWG works to make sure Corps projects have the signs they need and works to help streamline what shows up in our areas. We can have beautiful recreation areas or we can have beautiful fields of signs. I prefer seeing the landscape.



**Sign Post** - What would you like me to share about you?

*Kim* - Married to Ken for 9 years (we ran off to Las Vegas and got married in the Little White Chapel after only knowing each other for a month and a half), two children Jon, who just graduated high school in May, and Jessica who is 16. I have 2 chihuahuas and a border collie.

I love to sing and love music. I enjoy experiencing new things and traveling to new places. My senior year in college my best friend and I did 48 states in 10 days over spring break and we have the postcards and photos to prove it. I love being outdoors and doing outdoor activities. I love gardening and flowers. I love to kayak but don't get to as much as I would like.

**Sign Post** - Tell me your vision for the Sign Program.

*Kim* - My vision for the sign program is to continue to make common sense decisions and continue modifying the program to best meet the needs of our customers at the projects across the nation. To be consistent, to be relevant, and to make people want to follow the standards because they make sense.

Sign Funnies



Have you seen a funny, bizarre, or just unusual sign? Send photos you have taken to **The Sign Post**.

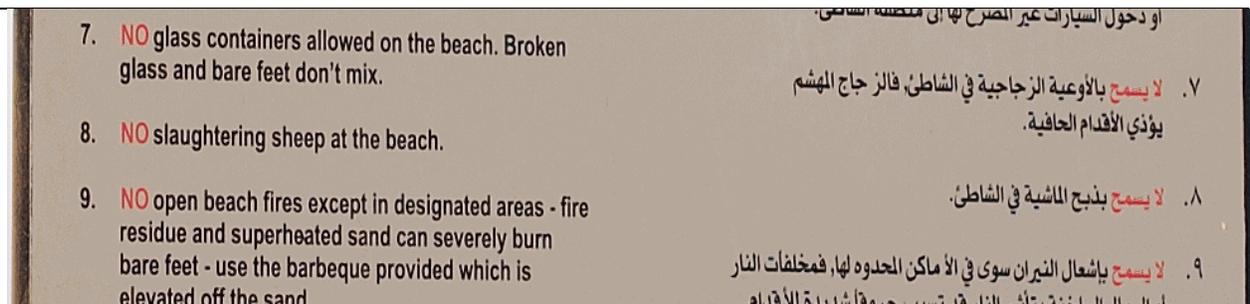
Huh? The top part is understandable. But what does the bottom panel mean? Can someone please translate the English translation?

Photo by Al Jensen, Chief Joseph Dam, NWS.

Henrik Strandkov, retired sign god, still has an eye for an interesting sign. He writes of the photo on the right, "Nikki and I walk past the Portland city 'shops' on our way to our jobs at the census office. I couldn't resist this photo of the city's sign 'facility'."



Eh-yuh. That STOP sign might come in useful one day.



Detail of beach rules sign in Saudi Arabia. Is number 8 an issue that should be added to Title 36 for Corps beaches?

Success with Signs

Have you a sign product, method of mounting signs, SignPro tip, or any other sign management tip or idea? We are always looking for new ideas to post on The Gateway. Share your ideas on sign management by submitting a Good Enough to Share (GETS) or Lessons Learned through the website, or directly to the MCX manager. It may also appear in a future edition of **The Sign Post**. If you have a photo you took of an interesting sign, a sign topic to suggest or a candidate for the interview for the next edition of **The Sign Post** please let us know.

# Natural Resources Management Gateway

to the future . . .

## New Things on the Gateway

The Sign Program section of the NRM Gateway is your one-stop resource for information regarding the Corps of Engineers sign program. The direct link is [www.corpslakes.us/sign](http://www.corpslakes.us/sign)

New to the Gateway in the Sign Program Section:

- A Key to Determining Sign Compliance Status.
- FAQs on directional signs, e.g. adding distances, working with state agencies, etc.
- Minutes from the recent Sign Advisory Work Group meeting in the SAWG section.
- The latest, revised, updated Manual of Uniform Traffic Control Devices.
- Presentation from the Federal Highway Administration regarding new reflectivity standards for traffic signs.
- This information and much more is on The Gateway.

## Waterway Signs and the Glare Issue

We have heard anecdotal complaints that our waterways signs glare. We need to document any problem signs to find solutions. If you have such a sign, please let Mike Kidby, our man in Navigation or Tim Grundhoffer in St. Paul know. We need to know the specific sign, its location in relation to the channel or lock, height above the water line, how old the sign is, frequency of complaints, and any actions that were taken to try to mitigate the problem.

Our waterways signs are made of highly reflective prismatic sheeting (Diamond Grade<sup>®</sup> by 3M or OmniView<sup>®</sup> by Avery) to make them more visible to recreational boaters at night. The high powered lights used by the navigation industry can create a powerful flare. The newer generation of sheeting material may not be as glaring as the original Diamond Grade.

## We Are “Translocating” – That Means We Are Moving

All the sign program files and manuals are in boxes and Friday, June 11<sup>th</sup>, “Co-Sign II” the computer that is the real brains of the National Sign Program will be unplugged. The St. Paul District hosts the National Sign Program Center for Expertise (MCX). The District Office is moving across the alley to **180 East 5<sup>th</sup> Street**. Please take note of the small, but significant, change in our mailing address. The e-mail address and phone numbers will remain the same. The Sign Program MCX will be back in business if all goes as planned on June 16<sup>th</sup>, coincidentally the 235<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the fortification Breed’s Hill and birth of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. *Essayons!*

The Sign Post is produced by the National Sign Program Center for Expertise (MCX).  
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The Sign Post is an unofficial newsletter for Corps of Engineers people involved with the sign program. Contributions to The Sign Post are welcome. Send short articles, ideas, suggestions, or photos that you have taken of unusual signs via your District Sign Program Manager to the National Sign Program MCX.