



Safety signs are a critical component of maritime safety, guiding crew and passengers in emergency situations and ensuring compliance with international safety regulations. For procurement professionals in the shipping industry, selecting the right safety signs involves several key considerations to ensure effectiveness, durability, and regulatory compliance.

REGULATORY COMPLIANCE

Adhering to regulatory standards is paramount. International regulations, particularly those set by the International Maritime Organisation (IMO), such as SOLAS (Safety of Life at Sea) and the ISPS (International Ship and Port Facility Security) Code, dictate specific requirements for safety signage on ships.

Additionally, local maritime authorities may have their own regulations. Ensuring that all signs comply with these standards is crucial to avoid penalties and ensure the safety of everyone on board.

“To ensure maximum compliance, procurement teams should consider the following factors,” says Tiago Pedrosa of Everlux. “MED and UK MER certified signs as applicable to the vessel, and signs that use safety symbols complying with the standards and regulations that are applicable to their vessels.”

“In this regard, purchasing teams should be aware that the latest safety signage regulation is IMO Resolution A.1116(30) ESCAPE ROUTE SIGNS AND EQUIPMENT LOCATION MARKINGS and should assess whether



the scope of their signage works must comply with the requirements of this resolution.”

“Another factor that should be considered is the technical competence of the suppliers that are being considered as well as the documentation that they can provide to support that competence.”

CATEGORIES OF SHIPBOARD SAFETY SIGNS

Understanding the different types of safety signs is essential. IMO Resolution A.1116(30) ESCAPE ROUTE SIGNS AND EQUIPMENT LOCATION MARKINGS includes eight different safety signage categories:

• **Means of Escape Signs (MES):**

these signs provide escape route identification.



• **Emergency Equipment Signs (EES):**

signs that identify the location of first aid facilities and portable safety equipment.



• **Life-saving systems and appliances signs (LSS):**

these signs provide use and location of life-saving equipment such as lifejackets, liferafts and lifebuoys.



• **Fire-fighting equipment signs (FES):**

these signs identify the location of fire-fighting equipment such as fire-extinguishers and fire alarm call points.



• **Prohibition Signs (PSS):**

these indicate actions that are prohibited, like “No Smoking” and “No Open Flames.”



• **Warning Signs (WSS):**

these signs warn of potential hazards, such as “High Voltage” or “Slippery Deck.”



• **Mandatory Action Signs (MSS):**

these signs provide mandatory actions and instructions such as “This door must be kept closed at sea” or “Head protection must be worn.”



• **Safety and operating instructions for trained personnel (SIS):**

These signs contain standardised Fire Control Plan symbols and are used onboard to assist trained persons in the operation and management of shipboard fire control systems.



With the exception of the Safety and operating instructions for trained personnel (SIS), the shipboard safety signage categories included in IMO Resolution A.1116(30) use the same graphical content as defined in ISO 24401-1, *Ships and marine technology – Design, location, and use of shipboard safety signs, safety-related signs, safety notices and safety markings – Part 1: Design Principles as well as in ISO 7010, Graphical Symbols – Safety colours and safety signs – Registered safety signs.*

Using the same graphical content and design principles in shipboard safety signs as what is already being used in safety signs used in buildings contributes to the development of a uniform safety signage communication system that allows everyone to quickly understand the message being conveyed by a safety signs, irrespectively if they are part of the crew or a passenger.

Each sign category serves a specific purpose and having that purpose during the selection process of the correct sign for each application will ensure the implementation of an effective signage system onboard. Combining different

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TIAGO PEDROSA
Marine & Offshore Market Manager, Everlux

Resolutions and Standards will also help in this goal as, for example, in vessels where Low Location Lighting Systems and Cabin Escape Plans are required, crews will have to also consider the design principles of ISO 15370, *Ships and marine technology – Low-location lighting (LLL) on passenger ships – Arrangement and Part 4 of ISO 24409*, Escape plan signs used for general emergency information.

MATERIAL AND DURABILITY

Maritime environments are harsh, with exposure to saltwater, UV radiation, and high humidity. Therefore, selecting the right materials for safety signs is critical. Signs made from durable materials like marine-grade aluminium or high-impact plastic can withstand these conditions better than standard materials. Longevity is another factor; investing in high-quality signs can reduce the need for frequent replacements, ultimately saving money.

“Make sure your supplier uses approved materials of a high standard,” advises Tracey Montgomery of Marine Lite Printing. “A lot of signs on the market are of a very low standard. With an approved supplier, you’re going to get the correct designs according to current regulations.”

COST VS. QUALITY

Balancing budget constraints with the need for quality is a common challenge. While higher-quality signs may come with a higher upfront cost, they offer better durability and longer lifespan, reducing the need for frequent replacements. Evaluating suppliers for reliability and quality assurance is also essential to ensure that you are getting the best value for your investment.

While it’s hard to guarantee how long a sign will last, Montgomery says that one is well made could conceivably last for the life time of the vessel. “Provided its taken care of, then that could conceivably be the case. And by that I mean making sure it’s cleaned and treated correctly, and that environmental factors are taken into account.

“A sign on board a vessel that operates predominantly in the arctic will fare better than one that’s predominantly in the Mediterranean. Keep that in mind when specifying what you want.”

Pedrosa agrees. “The main benefit of investing in high-quality Everlux photoluminescent signage, for example, is the high luminance they produce and therefore the assurance the sign will be effective under any circumstance.”

“This claim is backed up by the certificates and test reports available on our products, but also by the thousands of signs installed on ships and other marine structures across the world during these 35 years in business.”

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TRACEY MONTGOMERY
Co-Owner, Marine Lite Printing SA

Buying safety signs for ships involves careful consideration of regulatory compliance, material durability, visibility, cost-effectiveness, and maintenance.

By focusing on these key areas, procurement professionals can ensure that their ships are equipped with the best possible safety signage, thereby enhancing the overall safety and security of their vessels.

Collaboration with safety officers and regulatory bodies is essential to meet the highest standards and ensure the well-being of crew and passengers alike.

By following these guidelines, procurement professionals can make informed decisions that contribute to the safety and efficiency of maritime operations.