The Lexicon of Safety Sign Headers

Safety signs come in all shapes, colors and sizes – and with a variety of signal words, too. "Warning" and "Caution" may seem interchangeable, but they actually are intended to communicate very different messages, according to OSHA and ANSI standards.

How do you know which OSHA or ANSI signal words and colors are correct for the message you want to communicate? **Here's what you need to know:**

SIGNAL WORDS
OSHA and ANSI standards assign signal words to hazardous situations based on a combination of these two factors:

1. Severity of the potential injury or damage
2. The likelihood of it happening

Not sure which style header to use?
OSHA allows both its older style and the newer ANSI styles to be used. A recent consensus standard proposed by OSHA (06/2013) recognizes that the new ANSI style provides an equal or greater level of protection and therefore will not issue violations if either or both styles are used.

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THE 5 SAFETY SIGNAL WORDS

DANGER
Most extreme hazardous situations

USE FOR
Marking an imminently hazardous situation that, if not avoided, **WILL** result in death or serious injury.

DON'T USE FOR
Property damage, unless serious personal injury risk is present.

COLORS
Red header (Pantone® 485C), white background and black text.

ANSI Header	OSHA Header
⚠ DANGER	DANGER

WARNING
Severely hazardous situations

USE FOR
Marking a hazardous situation that, if not avoided, **COULD** result in death or serious injury.

DON'T USE FOR
Property damage, unless serious personal injury risk is present.

COLORS
Orange header (Pantone® 152C), white background and black text.

ANSI Header	OSHA Header
⚠ WARNING	WARNING

CAUTION
Moderately hazardous situations

USE FOR
Marking a hazardous situation that may result in minor or moderate injury. May also be used without a safety alert symbol to warn against unsafe practices that can only result in property damage.

DON'T USE FOR
Hazardous situations where death or severe injury may occur.

COLORS
Yellow header (Pantone® 109C), white background and black text.

ANSI Header	OSHA Header
⚠ CAUTION	CAUTION

NOTICE
Company policy statements

USE FOR
Communicating important information, but not hazard related such as property damage, security, sanitation and housekeeping rules.

DON'T USE FOR
Hazardous situations where death or severe injury may occur.

COLORS
Blue header (Pantone® 2945C), white background and black text.

ANSI Header	OSHA Header
NOTICE	NOTICE

EMERGENCY
General safety instructions

USE FOR
Indicating general instructions relative to safe work practices, procedural reminders, and safety equipment locations.

DON'T USE FOR
Hazardous situations where death or severe injury may occur.

COLORS
Green header (Pantone® 3415C), white background and black text.

ANSI Header	OSHA Header
EMERGENCY	SAFETY FIRST

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