

A guide to

beach safety
signs, flags
and symbols



Lifeboats

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Ryan Pitney

This guide is dedicated to the memory of Ryan Pitney who died tragically in June 2004 at a beach in Cornwall; Ryan was four years old.

Ryan drowned doing one of the things he loved the most: playing at the seaside. That day there were no warnings seen by Ryan's mother informing her the sea could be dangerous.

'If only we had known, I would have been much more aware and cautious. I hope that beach owners and operators adopt these new signs to help prevent other families going through the same thing as we have. The more beaches that take up the new beach signage standard, the less Ryan's death was in vain.'

Vicky Pitney (Ryan's mother)

Preface

The lack of effective, consistent signs and safety flags on UK beaches has been identified over the past few years as a major contributing factor to many deaths and serious injuries. The Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) has, for the first time, produced this guide with the backing and cooperation of key organisations concerned with safety and it attempts to consolidate the existing best practice guidelines as issued by these key organisations. It is not intended to be a definitive document nor is it an exhaustive list of safety guidelines. However I hope it fulfils its aim of setting a standard for the design and content of national beach safety signs, flags and symbols and providing beach operators with sufficient information to enable them to set up effective and consistent sign and flag systems on their beaches.

This is becoming increasingly relevant in the current climate where the demands on UK beach operators are increasing every year with growing recreational activities and visitor numbers, making the need for effective safety management an even greater priority. Beach operators have a duty of care to see that visitors to their beaches are reasonably safe, which entails providing adequate safety measures. In order to assess the most appropriate safety measures it is recommended that a risk assessment of each beach is carried out.

Effective signage will provide the public with the means to make more detailed decisions on safety whilst on the beach. However, signs should never take away the public's responsibility for its own actions and subsequent safety. It is important that beach users understand the risks and, equally important, the need to take care of their own welfare and be aware of the environment they are in.

The benefits of standardising the design and content of beach safety information are immeasurable but, one thing is certain, our beaches will become safer as more operators adopt these standard measures. I strongly urge you to read and use this guide to help make all our beaches safer places to visit.

*Steve Wills, Beach Safety Manager, RNLI
Member of BSI Committee PH/8/2
July 2007*

The following organisations have had a key role in the compilation of this guide; without them it would not have been possible.



MCA
(Maritime and Coastguard Agency)



MCS
(Marine Conservation Society)



NBSC
(National Beach Safety Council)



NWSF
(National Water Safety Forum)



RoSPA
(Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents)



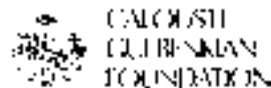
SAS
(Surfers Against Sewage)

The RNLI wishes to thank members of BSI Committee – Public Information, Graphical Symbols and Signs (PH/8) for their contribution and technical assistance with the development of this guide.

This guide has been prepared taking into account ISO 20712 Water safety signs and beach safety flags, currently under development within the International Organization for Standardization (ISO).

The RNLI would also like to thank the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for their generous contribution towards the production of this guide.

Supported by



Disclaimer

The content of this document is for general guidance only. It represents best practice as at the date of publication and should not be considered as legal advice. Those using this guide should seek professional advice as and when necessary. The RNLI does not accept responsibility for any errors in this document.

Introduction

Signs and flags are important on beaches to tell users about the safety risks, lifeguard services and local information. The signs and flags are not only important to people who are unfamiliar with the beach but also provide important information about the conditions for regular beach users.

A successful sign and flag system will minimise confusion and anxiety, allowing beach users to feel more confident in their knowledge of safety when on the beach.

A good sign and flag system should be clear, concise and consistent. Following the guidance in this document will help make your beach a safer environment for users.

It is not only the content of the signs that is important, but also the position in which they are fixed. Careful consideration on site should be given to determine the best position for all signs.

The number of signs and their locations should be determined through a beach risk assessment. This guide is to help beach operators decide the sign requirement only if a need is indicated through the risk assessment process. Remember, in many cases the results of a risk assessment will indicate there are no sign requirements, such as at isolated locations or very quiet beaches where the level of risk is very low.

How to use this document

This document should be used as a guide by beach owners and operators when specifying and installing new signs and flags. You may find it helpful to visit each beach with this document so you can refer directly to the sign, flag and symbol designs. If you have any questions when using this guide please contact the RNLI Lifeguards team: contact details can be found on the inside back cover of this document.

Safety signs

The majority of this guide is dedicated to signs; the signs have been categorised into the following groups: Primary entrance signs, Secondary entrance signs, Reminder signs, Mobile signs, Directional signs and Symbol signs. The section of this document 'Placing signs' will help you work out how many of each sign you need for your beach and where to locate them. You will probably need to use most groups of signs listed above, but the quantity will vary depending on beach size and risk assessment.

The specification for manufacturing signs offers some flexibility depending on budget available. The sign order forms on the CD in the back pocket of this guide will prove useful as they can work as a checklist to make sure you have considered all sign groups.

Safety flags

There is a British Standards requirement for the shape and colour of beach safety flags and this information is summarised within this guide. More information about beach safety flags can be obtained direct from British Standards.

Symbols

Inside the back cover of this document you will find a Symbol directory showing the most common symbols you will need on your signs. You may find additional symbol meanings are required, in which case you are asked to refer to the latest British Standards. The Symbols directory may be updated from time to time and you will be sent replacement pages.

Welsh language

If you are looking to specify signs for a beach in Wales you will need to refer to the supplement pages concerning dual-language consideration (see inside back pocket).

Electronic version of this guide

A read-only pdf version of this guide, including the dual-language supplement, can be found inside the back cover.

Signs on beaches tell beach users about hazards, prohibited actions, lifeguard services and local information. There are a variety of signs to choose from and they should be positioned in sequence at the beach entrances and along the beach.

Design templates for the different types of beach signs have been created for you to use; the content of the signs can be modified to suit your needs. All sign visuals shown are for illustrative purposes only. Any information contained on the beach used in the example. Nominal dimensions are shown in millimetres.

Signs to be installed on a beach in Wales should display English and Welsh text. If you are a beach owner or operator in Wales you should have a Welsh supplement inside the back cover of this guide. If not, or if you would like help with any other cultural considerations, please contact the RNLI Lifeguards team (see contact details inside back cover).

Signs



Primary entrance signs

There are three styles of Primary entrance signs, which are summarised on the opposite page; there are no direct rules about which to use, simply use the style that best suits your needs.

A Primary entrance sign should be placed at each main entrance to the beach; the exact position will depend on the nature of your beach and the style of Primary entrance sign you select. The notes on the opposite page will help you determine which style of sign is most suitable for you.

Each style of Primary entrance sign is divided into sections. Each section has a fixed dimension and always displays the same information. Use the templates on the following pages to select the information you wish to display.

Colour codes

The following colour codes are essential principles of the signs:

Red background, Pantone 032 C
Beach name, location code, logo and emergency information

White background
Warning and prohibition symbols
Supporting logos

Yellow background, Pantone 109 C
Lifeguard service information, unless there is no service in which case the background should be red

Blue background, Pantone 281 C
Local information

Location code

Many beaches already operate a coding system for signs. A new best-practice system for coding Primary entrance signs has been introduced at various locations throughout the UK. This scheme is aimed at those beaches without a current coding system for signs, those updating their present system, or those where the schemes are not working effectively. The codes provide a precise location that will help the emergency services locate an incident. You will also find this scheme a useful reference code when managing your beach safety signs. Please refer to page 59 of this guide to determine your location codes.

Sign reverse

There is some flexibility with the content of the reverse of each sign. Large-scale emergency information could be displayed for beach users to view from a distance or if your beach has received an award, for example Blue Flag or Quality Coast Award, you may wish to use the reverse panel to display details required by the award body. Please refer to page 18 for visuals showing the reverse of signs.

Typography

The typeface, which must be used on all signs, is Frutiger 65 Bold. Text sizes are detailed within each sign type section.



Single panel sign

This is the smallest of the Primary entrance signs, most suited to rural beaches. The reverse can either display identical artwork, large-scale emergency information or award information, as detailed on page 18.



Double panel sign

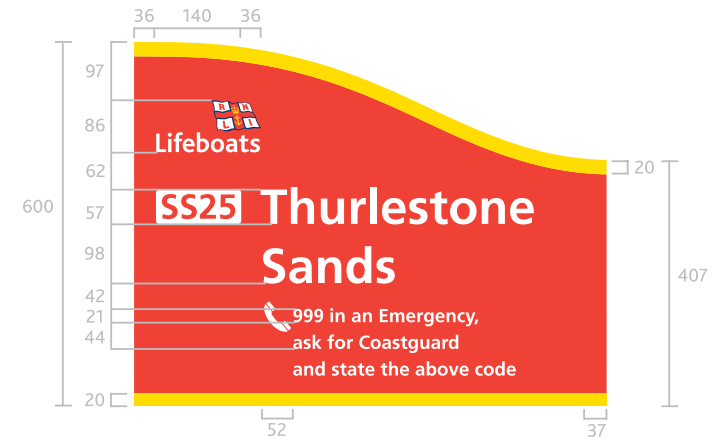
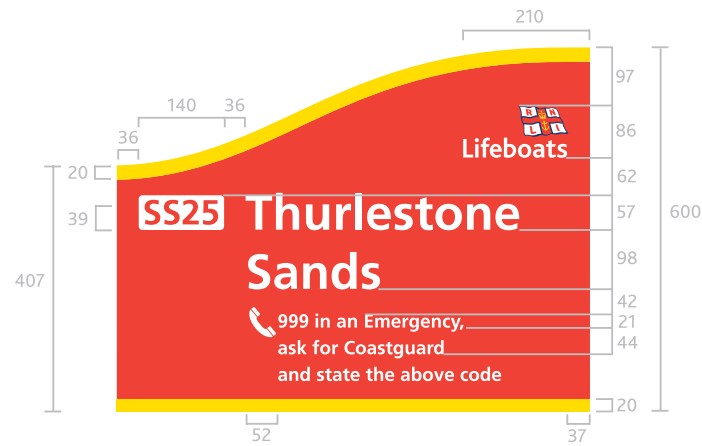
This style is most suited to resort beaches, fixed in a location where the reverse of the sign can be seen by people on the beach. The reverse can either display identical artwork, large-scale emergency information or award information, as detailed on page 18.



Triangular sign unit

This unit is specifically designed for beaches that have met award criteria, such as Blue Flag or Quality Coast Awards. The third face of the unit should display this criteria as detailed on page 18.

Primary entrance signs: single panel



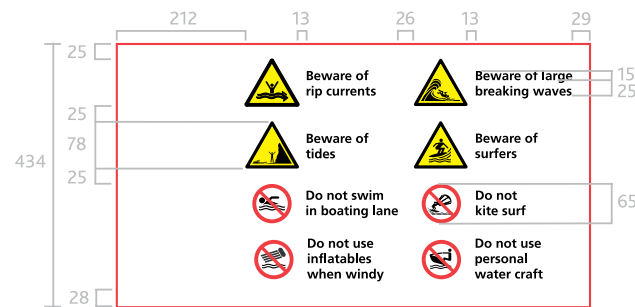
Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: '999 in an Emergency, ask for Coastguard'.

Reverse layout specification

About these signs

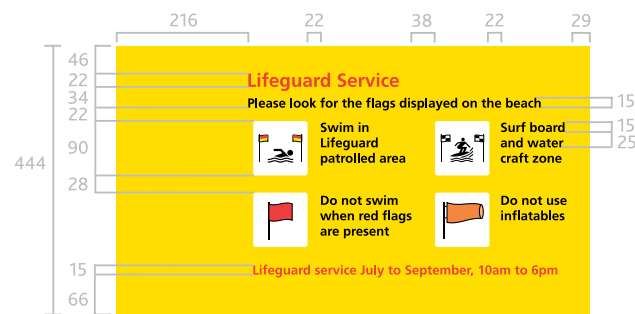
Red background

The beach name, location code and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background. The RNLI logo can then be repositioned in the white panel at the foot of the sign.



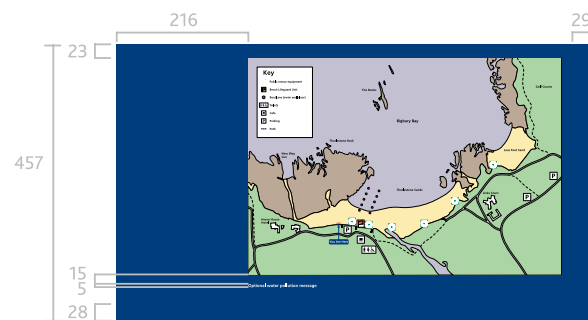
White background

There is room for up to eight safety symbols to be displayed; these are to be a combination of hazard and prohibition symbols and should be displayed in order according to risk. Please choose appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this document.



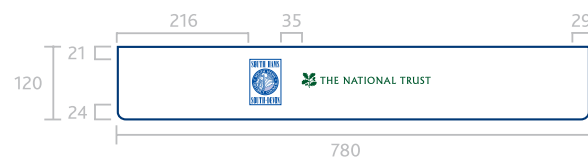
Yellow background

You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach (refer to Symbols directory), together with lifeguard service dates and times. During non-lifeguard periods an optional panel, shown opposite, should be applied.



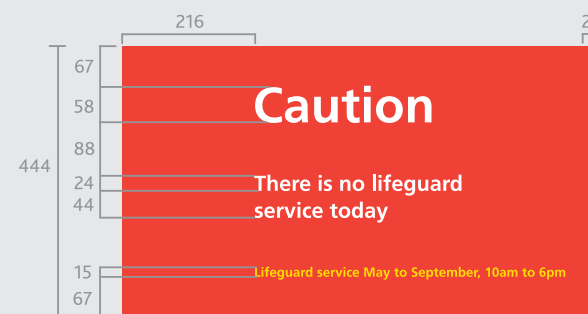
Blue background

A local area map showing your beach should be displayed here. An optional water pollution message can also be included under the map. Please refer to page 40 for more information.

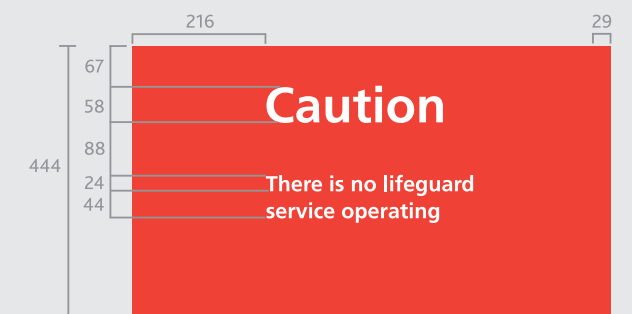


Front layout specification

Optional cover panels



During out-of-season months it is advisable to cover the yellow section of the sign with the above red section. This section can be ordered as an additional panel and screwed over the top of the yellow section during the out-of-season period.



If there is no lifeguard service on your beach you should replace the yellow section of the sign with the red section shown above.

Primary entrance signs: double panel



About these signs

Red background

The beach name, location code and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background. The RNLI logo can then be repositioned in the white panel at the foot of the sign.

White background

There is room for up to four hazard symbols and four prohibition symbols to be displayed. The symbols should be ordered according to risk, with hazards displayed first as shown. Please choose appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this document.

Yellow background

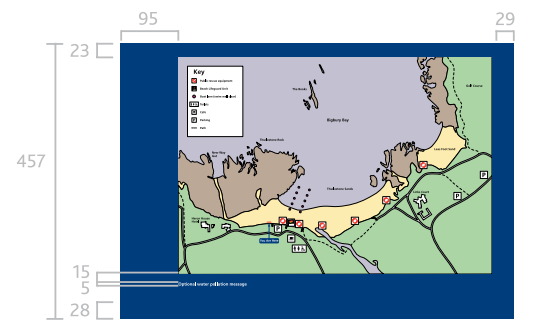
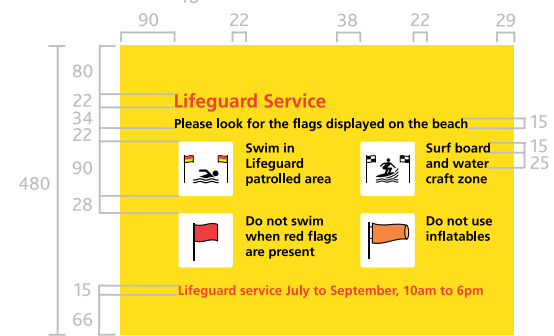
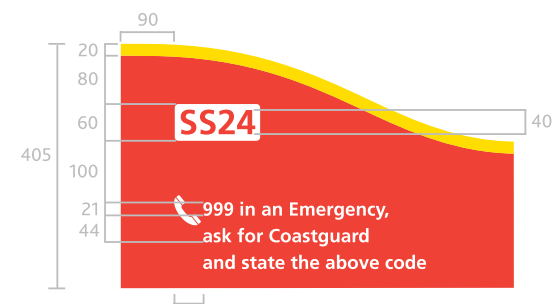
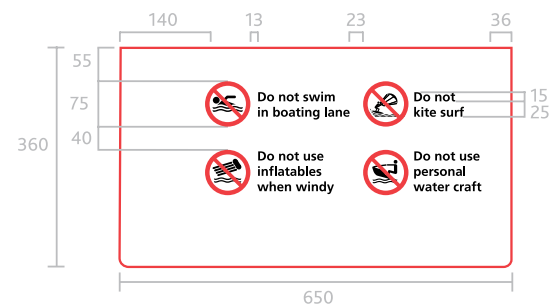
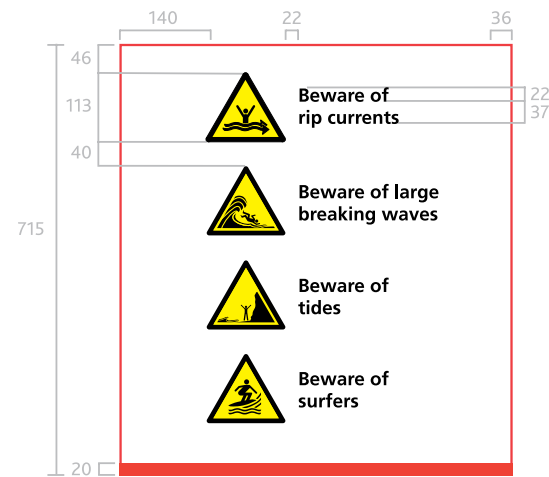
You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach (refer to Symbols directory), together with lifeguard service dates and times. During non-lifeguard periods an optional panel, shown opposite, should be applied.

Blue background

A local area map showing your beach should be displayed here. An optional water pollution message can also be included under the map. Please refer to page 40 for more information.

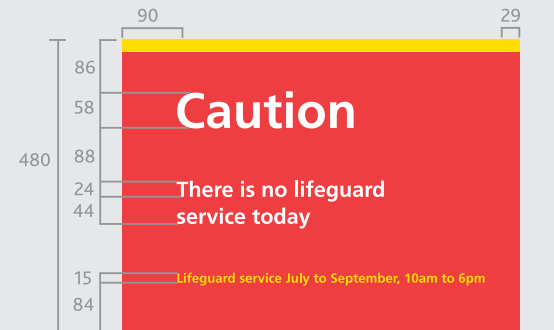
White background

Up to three support or sponsorship logos can be displayed here, within the margins indicated.

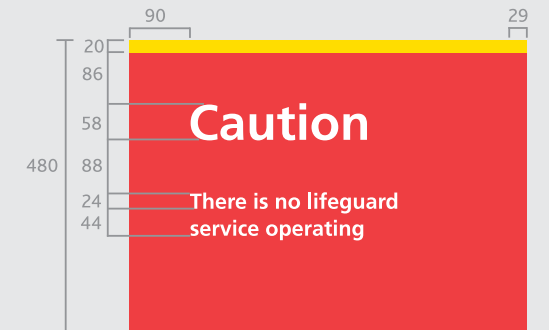


Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: '999 in an Emergency, ask for Coastguard'.

Optional cover panels



During out-of-season months it is advisable to cover the yellow section of the sign with the above red section. This section can be ordered as an additional panel and screwed over the top of the yellow section during the out-of-season period.



If there is no lifeguard service on your beach you should replace the yellow section of the sign with the red section shown above.

Primary entrance signs: triangular unit



About these signs

Red background

The beach name, location code and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background. The RNLI logo can then be repositioned in the white panel at the foot of the sign.

White background

There is room for up to four hazard symbols and four prohibition symbols to be displayed. The symbols should be ordered according to risk, with hazards displayed first as shown. Please choose appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this document.

Yellow background

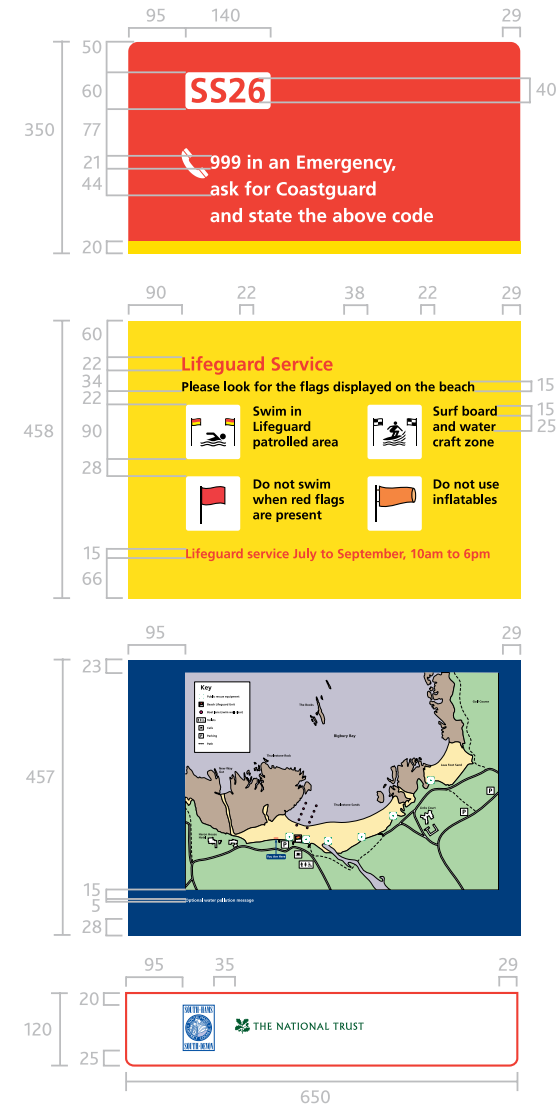
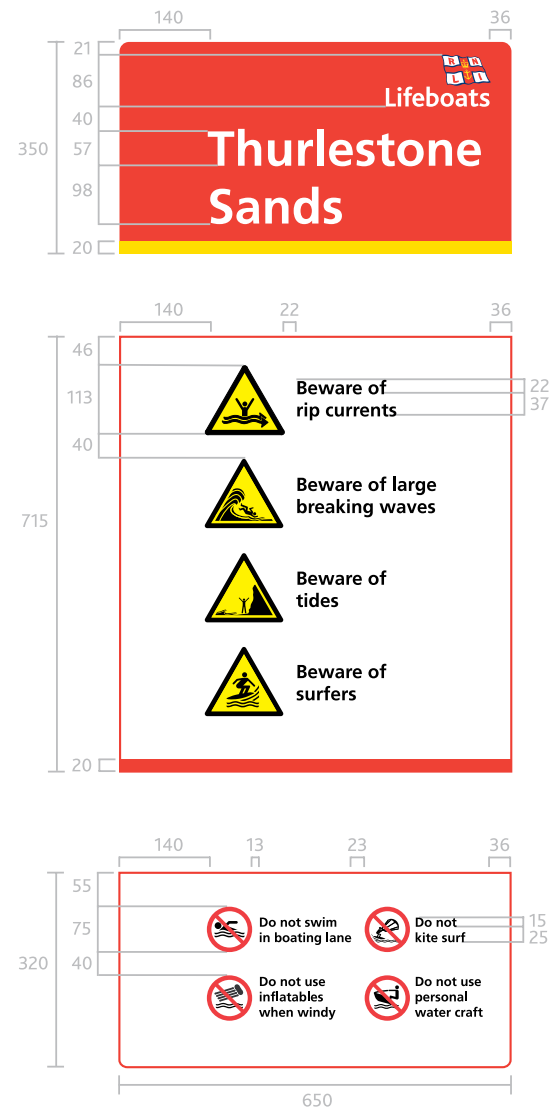
You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach (refer to Symbols directory), together with lifeguard service dates and times. During non-lifeguard periods an optional panel, shown opposite, should be applied.

Blue background

A local area map showing your beach should be displayed here. An optional water pollution message can also be included under the map. Please refer to page 40 for more information.

White background

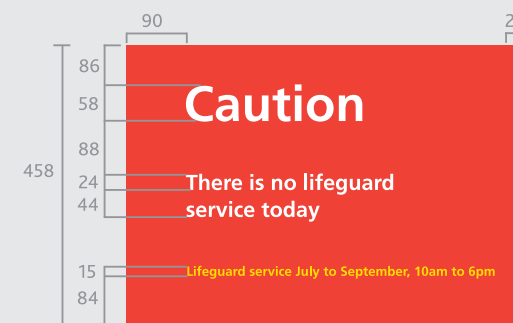
Up to three support or sponsorship logos can be displayed here, within the margins indicated.



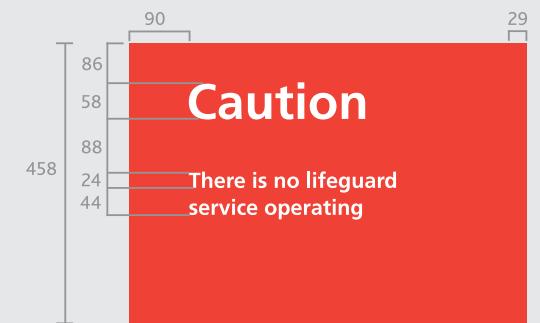
Please turn to page 18 for details about the third side (reverse) of this triangular unit.

Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: '999 in an Emergency, ask for Coastguard'.

Optional cover panels



During out-of-season months it is advisable to cover the yellow section of the sign with the above red section. This section can be ordered as an additional panel and screwed over the top of the yellow section during the out-of-season period.



If there is no lifeguard service on your beach you should replace the yellow section of the sign with the red section shown above.

Primary entrance signs: reverse

About these signs

There are three designs for the reverse of Primary entrance signs, regardless of whether you have chosen a single panel, double panel or triangular unit. Please select the one that best suits your needs. The options are displayed on the right.

If you have any questions concerning the details of information regarding awards such as Blue Flag or Quality Coast Awards please contact the award operator.

Option 1

Repeat the sign content from the front of the sign. Please refer back to Primary entrance signs (pages 12, 14 or 16) of this guide for specification details.

Option 2

Display large-scale emergency information, details are shown on pages 19, 20 and 21.

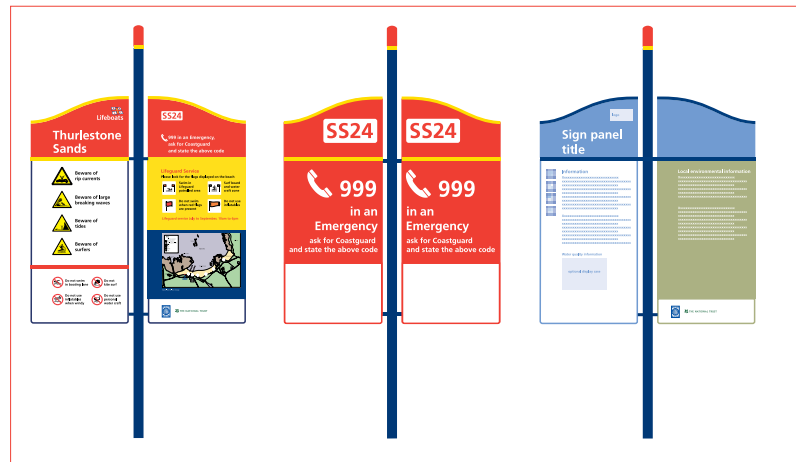
Option 3

Display details of beach information such as local amenities, environmental education, wildlife or beach awards (for example, Blue Flag, Quality Coast Award). Guidance is given on pages 23, 24 and 25.

In some situations, such as against a wall or on a promenade, the Primary entrance single panel sign can show the reverse facing next to it (see illustration below). It can be single or double sided.



Single panel sign reverse options 1, 2, 3

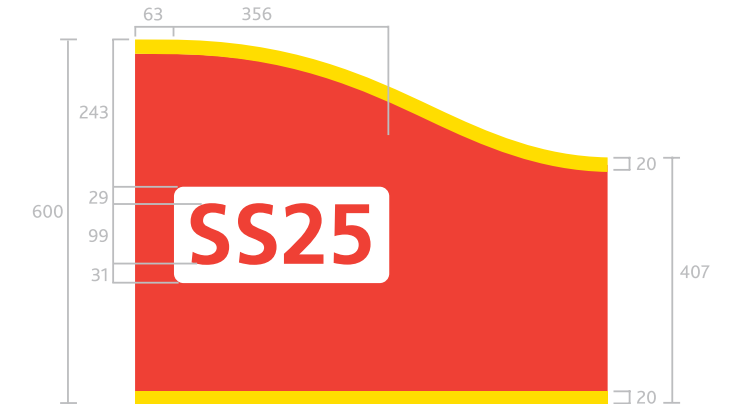
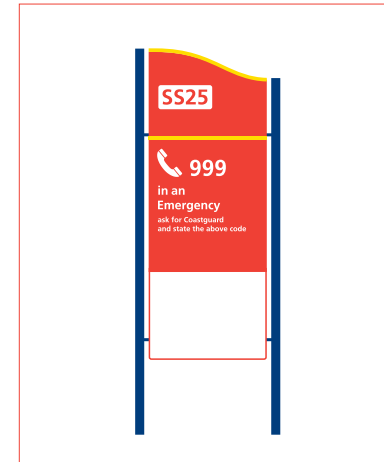


Double panel sign reverse options 1, 2, 3



Triangular sign unit reverse options 1, 2, 3

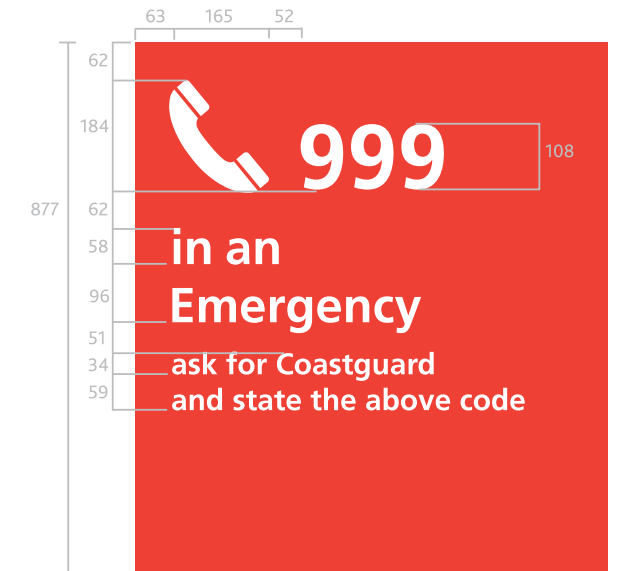
Primary entrance single panel reverse: emergency information



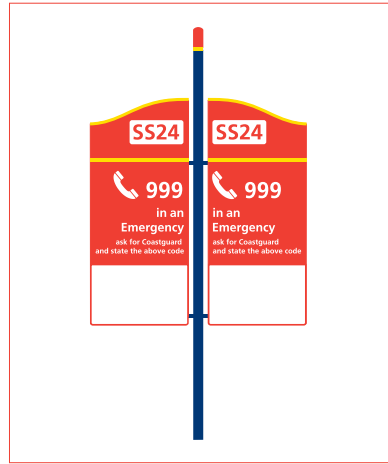
About these signs

If you are fixing a single panel sign directly to a wall or railings, the reverse sign design can be displayed as another single panel adjacent to the front panel. Care should be taken to use neat fixing methods.

Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: 'in an Emergency ask for Coastguard'.



Primary entrance double panel reverse: emergency information



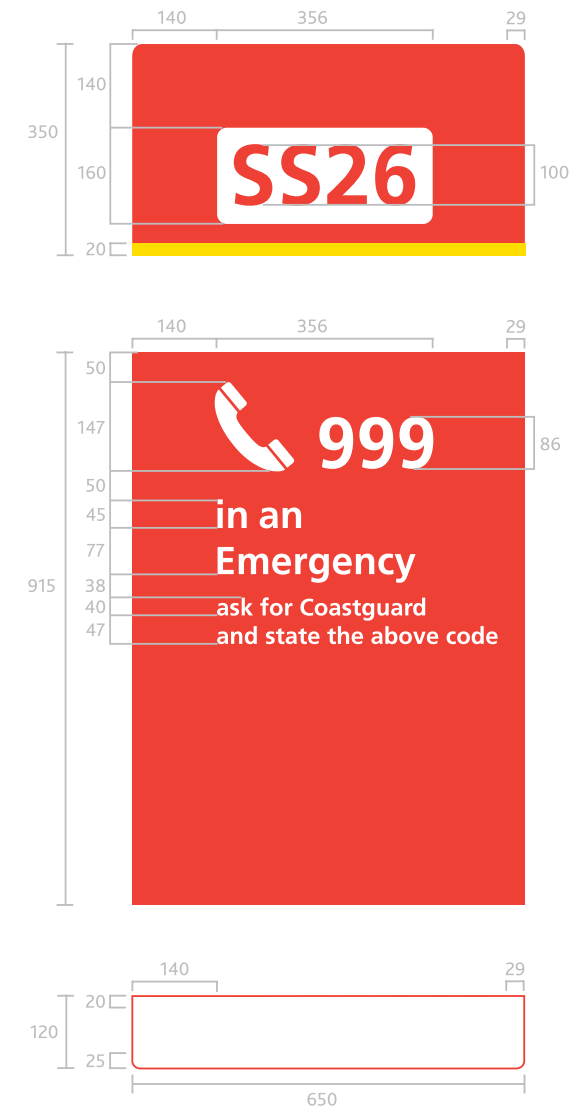
Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: 'in an Emergency ask for Coastguard'.



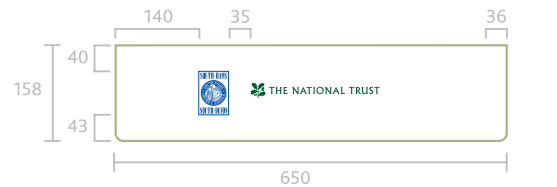
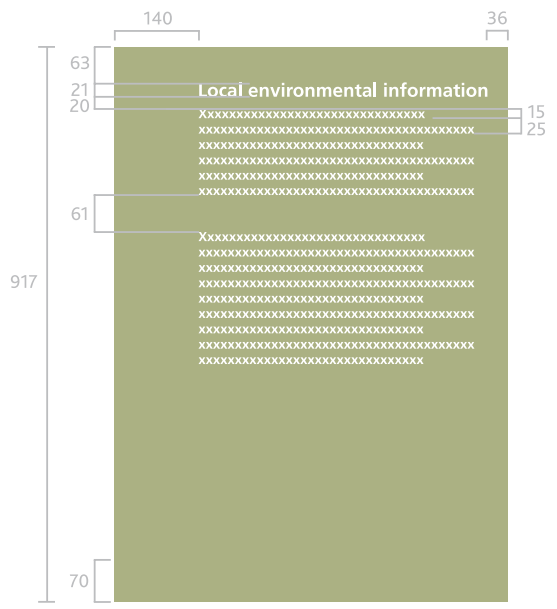
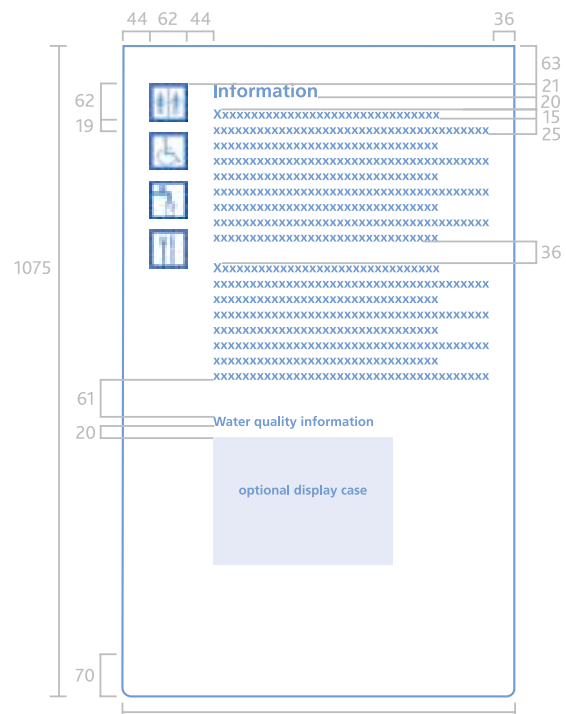
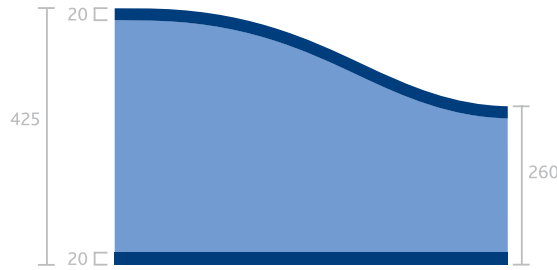
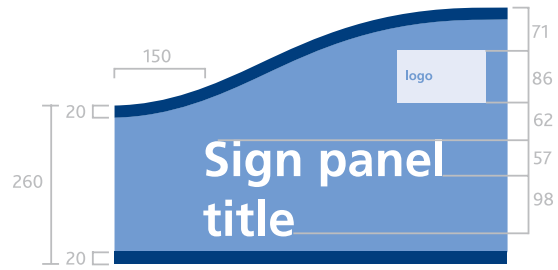
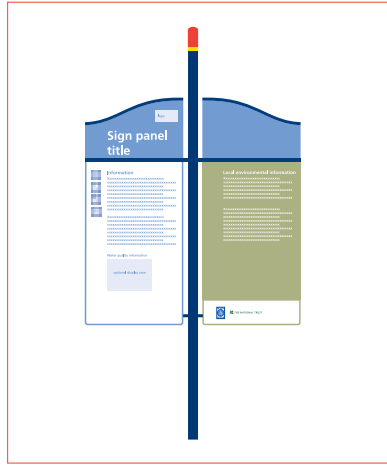
Primary entrance triangular unit reverse: emergency information



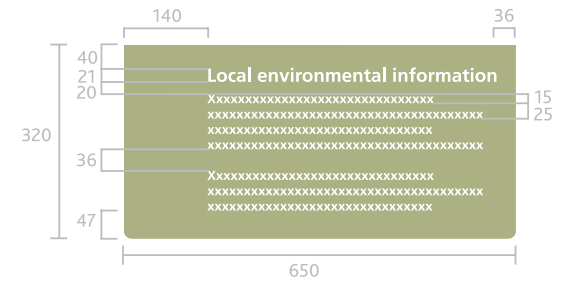
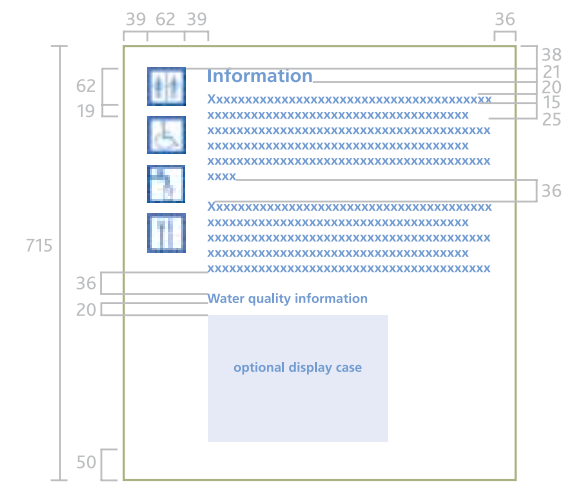
Where a location code is not used, the emergency text should read: 'in an Emergency ask for Coastguard'.



Primary entrance double panel reverse: display of information



Primary entrance triangular unit reverse: display of information



Secondary entrance signs

There are two types of Secondary entrance signs, which are summarised on the opposite page; the type you choose depends on whether your beach offers a lifeguard service.

A Secondary entrance sign should be placed at each entrance that is not a main entrance: for example, a small footway leading to the beach, dune access or coastal path access. The Secondary entrance signs can also be used to reinforce an entrance area such as a promenade or at small or rural beaches. The section of this guide called Placing signs (page 44) will help you determine where to fix Secondary entrance signs.

Each Secondary entrance sign is made up of sections; each section has a fixed dimension and always displays the same information. Use the templates on the following pages to select the information you wish to display.

Colour codes

The following colour codes are essential principles of the signs:

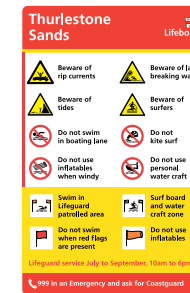
Red background, Pantone 032 C
Beach name, logo and emergency information

White background
Warning and prohibition symbols

Yellow background, Pantone 109 C
Lifeguard service information, unless there is no service in which case the background should be red

Typography

The typeface, which must be used on all signs, is Frutiger 65 Bold. Text sizes are detailed within each sign type section.



Lifeguarded beach

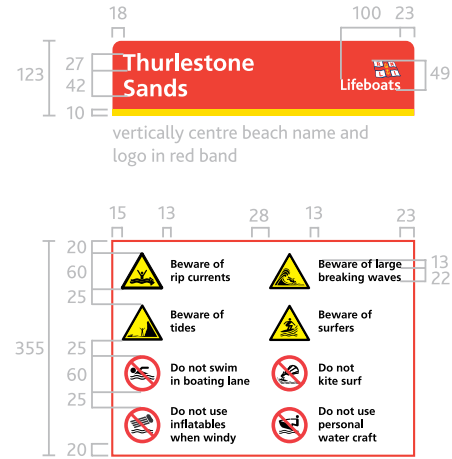
This sign should be used on beaches that have a lifeguard service, even if it is seasonal. These signs are designed to be placed at secondary beach entrances, or they can be used at main entrances if the beach is small and rural. This type of sign may also be useful when placed at regular intervals along an open promenaded beach.



Non-lifeguarded beach

This sign should be used on beaches that do not have a lifeguard service. These signs are designed to be placed at secondary beach entrances, or they can be used at main entrances if the beach is small and rural. This type of sign may also be useful when fixed at regular intervals along an open promenaded beach.

Secondary entrance signs: lifeguarded beach



About these signs

Red background

The beach name, logo and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background.

White background

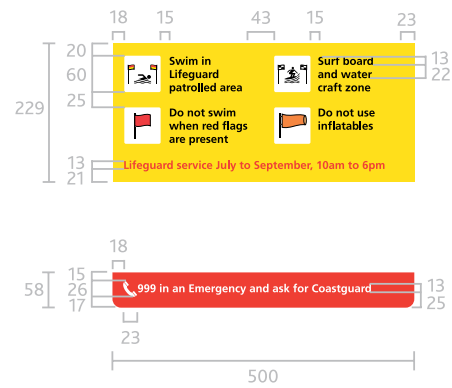
There is room for up to eight safety symbols to be displayed; these can be a combination of hazard and prohibition symbols. The symbols should be ordered according to risk, with hazards displayed first as shown. Please choose the appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this guide.

Yellow background

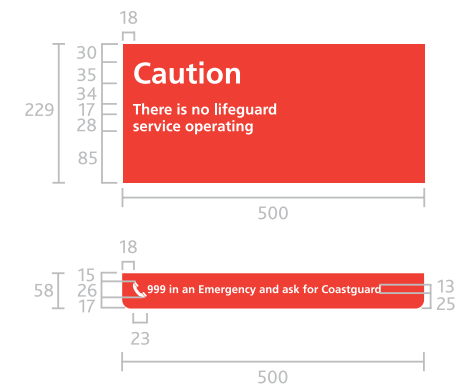
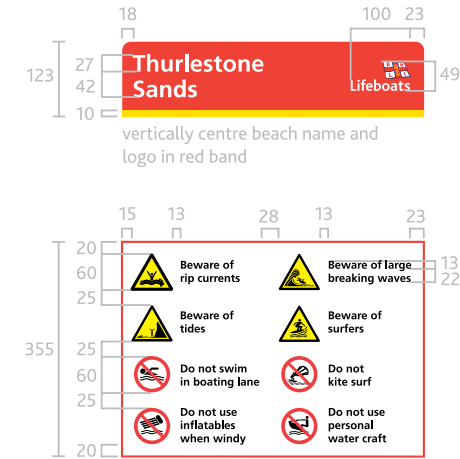
You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach, together with lifeguard service dates and times. During out-of-season periods an optional panel, shown opposite, should be applied.

Red background

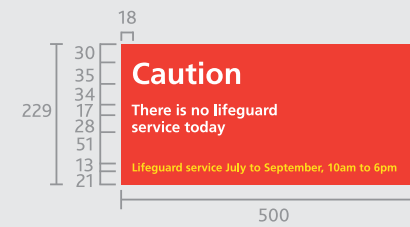
If your beach does not have a lifeguard service caution advice should be given as shown.



Secondary entrance signs: non-lifeguarded beach



Optional cover panel (lifeguarded beach)



During out-of-season months it is advisable to cover the yellow section of the sign with the above red section. This section can be ordered as an additional panel and screwed over the top of the yellow section during the out-of-season period.

Reminder signs

There are two types of Reminder signs, for lifeguarded and non-lifeguarded beaches, which are summarised on the opposite page. There are horizontal and vertical versions of each sign type.

Reminder signs should be fixed in positions that best suit your beach: for example, fixed along the beach, facing the beach and water, so the signs can be read by beach users, or fixed near facilities such as the toilets or a cafe. The signs should be placed at regular intervals along the beach length. The section of this guide called Placing signs (page 44) will help you decide where to fix Reminder signs.

Each Reminder sign is made up of sections; each section has a fixed dimension and always displays the same information. Use the templates on the following pages to select the information you wish to display.

Colour codes

The following colour codes are essential principles of the signs:

Red background, Pantone 032 C
Beach name, logo and emergency information

White background
Warning and prohibition symbols

Yellow background, Pantone 109 C
Lifeguard service information

Typography

The typeface, which must be used on all signs, is Frutiger 65 Bold. Text sizes are detailed within each sign type section.



Lifeguarded beach, vertical

This sign should be used at beaches that offer a lifeguard service; during out-of-season periods a cover plate can be applied. Vertical signs are designed to be fixed to a post, fence or railings if height permits.



Lifeguarded beach, horizontal

This sign should be used at beaches that offer a lifeguard service; during out-of-season periods a cover plate can be applied. Horizontal signs are designed to be fixed to low-level railings or fencing, for example along a promenade.



Non-lifeguarded beach, vertical

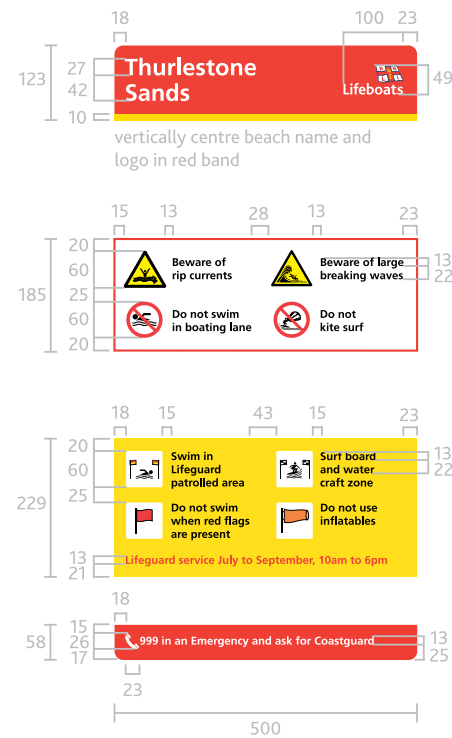
This sign should be used at beaches that do not have a lifeguard service. Vertical signs are best suited fixed to a post, fence or railings if height permits.



Non-lifeguarded beach, horizontal

This sign should be used at beaches that do not have a lifeguard service. Horizontal signs are designed to be fixed to low-level railings or fencing, for example along a promenade.

Reminder signs: lifeguarded beach, vertical



About these signs

Red background

The beach name, logo and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background.

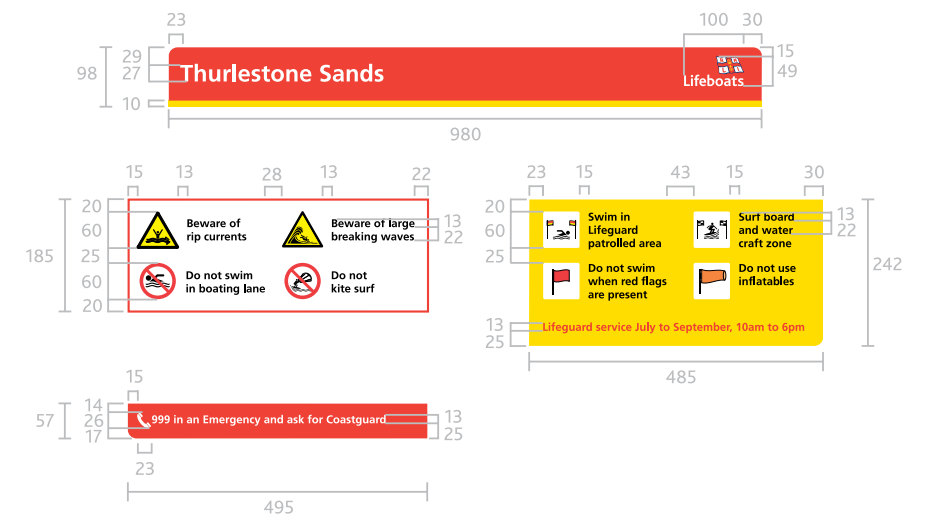
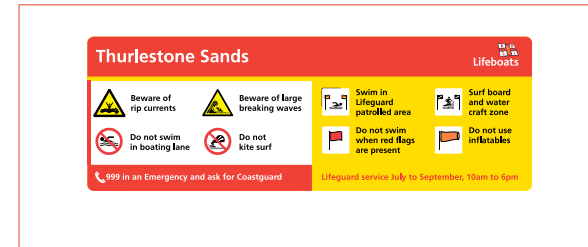
White background

There is room for up to four safety symbols to be displayed; these can be a combination of hazard and prohibition symbols. The symbols should be ordered according to risk, with hazards displayed first as shown. Please choose appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this document.

Yellow background

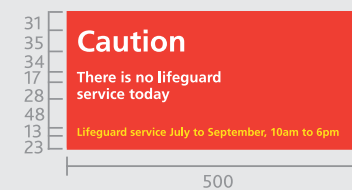
You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach, together with lifeguard service dates and times. During out-of-season periods an optional panel, shown opposite, should be applied.

Reminder signs: lifeguarded beach, horizontal

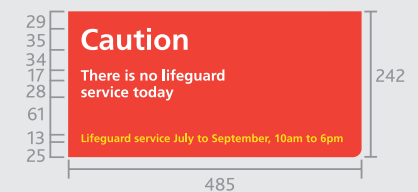


Optional cover panels

vertical

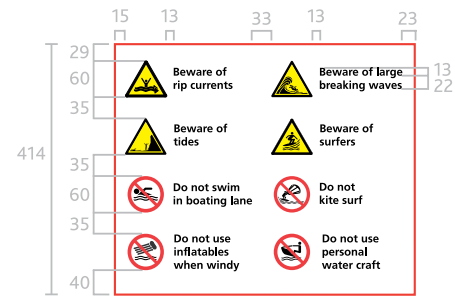
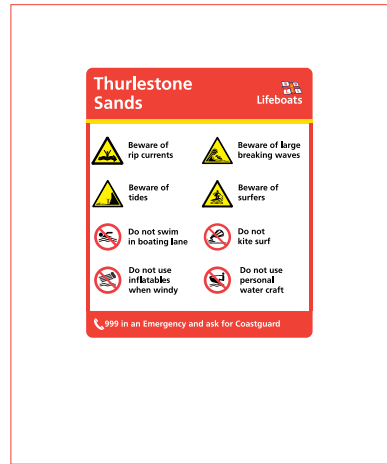


horizontal



During out-of-season months it is advisable to cover the yellow section of the vertical and horizontal sign with the above corresponding red section. This section can be ordered as an additional panel and screwed over the top of the yellow section during the out-of-season period.

Reminder signs: non-lifeguarded beach, vertical



About these signs

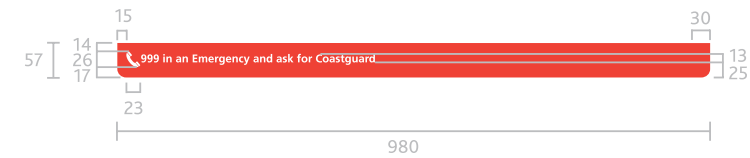
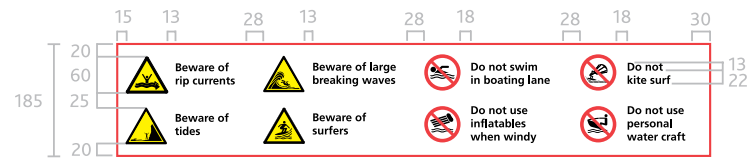
Red background

The beach name, logo and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background.

White background

There is room for up to eight safety symbols to be displayed; these can be a combination of hazard and prohibition symbols. The symbols should be ordered according to risk, with hazards displayed first as shown. Please choose appropriate symbols for your beach from the Symbols directory at the back of this document.

Reminder signs: non-lifeguarded beach, horizontal



Mobile signs

Double-sided mobile (swing) signs should only be used during lifeguard service hours. They should be positioned at intervals along the beach and near lifeguard units. These signs should be used by lifeguards as a teaching aid to beach users, particularly to tell children about the FLAGS mnemonic message (see panel on opposite page). The reverse of the sign has a white area where daily information should be handwritten. Mobile signs should be kept in the lifeguard unit when not in use.

About these signs

Red background

The beach name, logo and emergency text should be displayed as shown. The RNLI logo can be replaced with a local authority or landowner logo; care must be taken to ensure the logo is visible against the red background.

Yellow background

You should show the flag illustrations appropriate to your beach, together with lifeguard service dates and times.

White background

The FLAGS message should be displayed as shown. Lifeguards can use this message as a teaching aid on the beach.

Blue background

The words displayed are headings to allow each beach to display daily information.

White background

Please use this space to write daily information; this white area can be written on with an appropriate pen and cleaned with a suitable agent.

Colour codes

The following colour codes are essential principles of the signs:

Red background, Pantone 032 C
Beach name, logo and emergency information

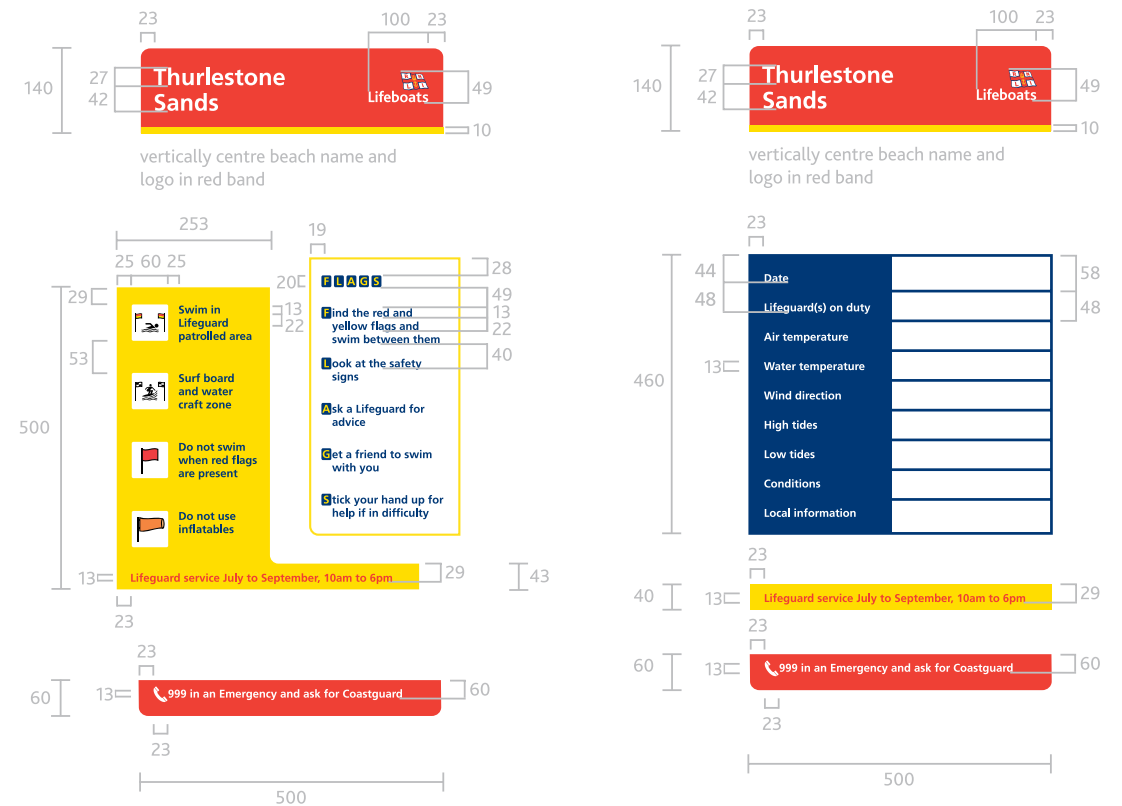
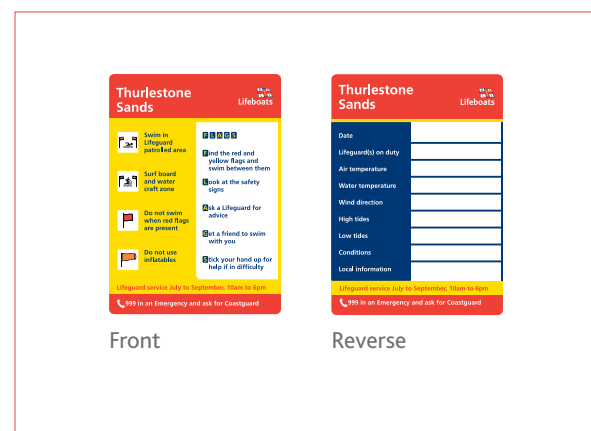
White background
FLAGS message and local information

Yellow background, Pantone 109 C
Lifeguard service information

Blue background, Pantone 281 C
Local information headings

Typography

The typeface, which must be detailed within each sign type section.



Directional and Symbol signs

Directional and Symbol signs display precise information and are small in size. These signs can be displayed temporarily depending on conditions or local circumstances.

Directional signs should commonly be used to direct beach users along the beach to the lifeguard service unit, public rescue equipment and emergency communications. These signs are usually fixed at a low level, with a distance of between 1.2m and 1.5m from the base of the sign to ground level. The signs must be fixed at regular intervals along the beach to provide a sequence of signs for people to follow. It is advisable to display the appropriate symbol, text and distance (in metres) to the facility.

The Symbol signs work on a stand alone basis; they highlight specific features or dangers such as a hazard, prohibition or public facility. These signs would usually be fixed adjacent to the actual hazard, prohibition or facility point.

Colour codes

The following colour codes are essential principles of the signs:

Red background, Pantone 032 C
In the case of a Directional sign, the title of the facility being directed to, such as 'Lifeguard service', is displayed here. In the case of Symbol signs, 'Warning' or 'Prohibition' is displayed.

White background
Warning or prohibition symbols

Yellow background, Pantone 109 C
Lifeguard service information

Green symbols, Pantone 3405 C
Public rescue equipment and emergency communication symbols

Typography

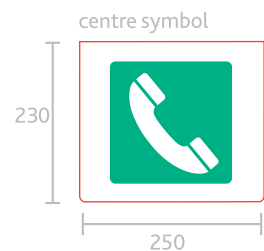
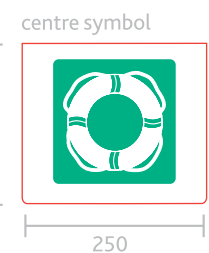
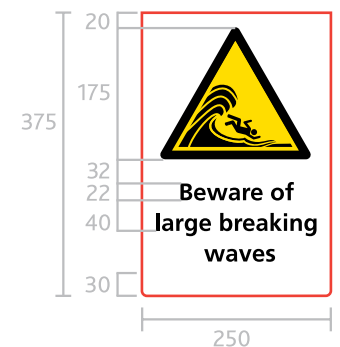
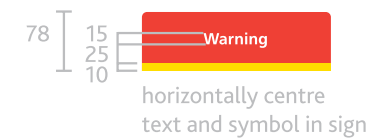
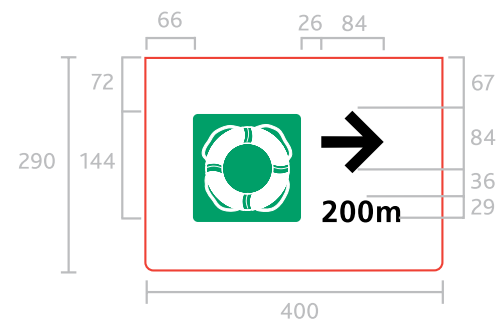
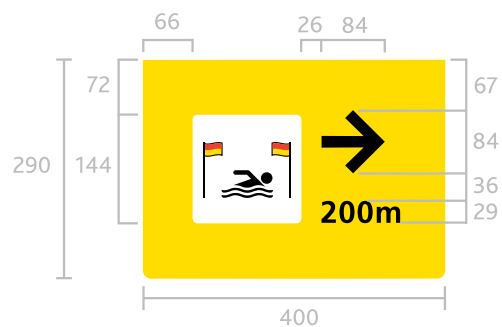
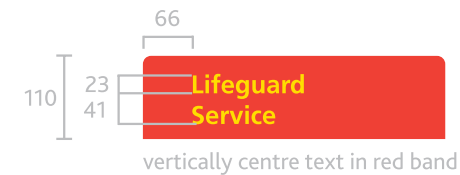
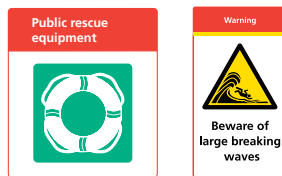
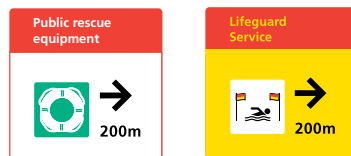
The typeface, which must be used on all signs, is Frutiger 65 Bold. Text sizes are detailed within each sign type section.

Directional

These signs should appear in a sequence along a beach to direct beach users to key facilities such as lifeguard patrolled areas, public rescue equipment and emergency communications. Directional signs can be fixed to a post, wall, fence or railings. There are two Directional sign sizes: 400x400mm or 500x500mm (scaled version of 400x400mm sign).

Symbol

These signs should be used to identify or locate a particular hazard, prohibition or public facility. Symbol signs can be fixed to a post, wall, fence or railings fence. There are two Symbol sign scales: a width 250mm or a width 400mm (scaled version of width 250mm sign).



Map design

A local area map should be displayed on the Primary entrance signs. This map is essential to locate key beach facilities such as the lifeguard service unit, public lifesaving equipment and toilets. The map allows beach users to orientate themselves on the beach before locating these facilities.

The illustrations on the next three pages show the process from first obtaining an Ordnance Survey (OS) map of your beach area through to modifying it and producing a finished local area map to display on the signs.

Your local authority should hold an electronic OS map of your beach. The maps can also be obtained directly from Ordnance Survey.

A map of Thurlestone Sands has been used for the purpose of this example.

Step 1: obtain your OS map

Obtain electronic OS map: it should look something like the one displayed on page 41.

Step 2: simplify the map

The OS map contains more detail than is needed; the map should be simplified by removing layers of information, simplifying shapes and the level of detail to leave only essential information: for example, the type of information removed from the map shown on page 42 includes the underlying grid, contour lines, private land and homes and unnecessary text labels.

The essential information that remains should include beach approach roads, access paths, car parking, facility buildings, main beach areas, water areas, main rock formations, prominent area features and text labels for these features.

It is important to remember that an over-simplified map will be hard to understand and similarly a map that is too cluttered with information will be difficult to read. The map should provide only the information that is relevant to the reader to help them orientate themselves and find the facilities they need.

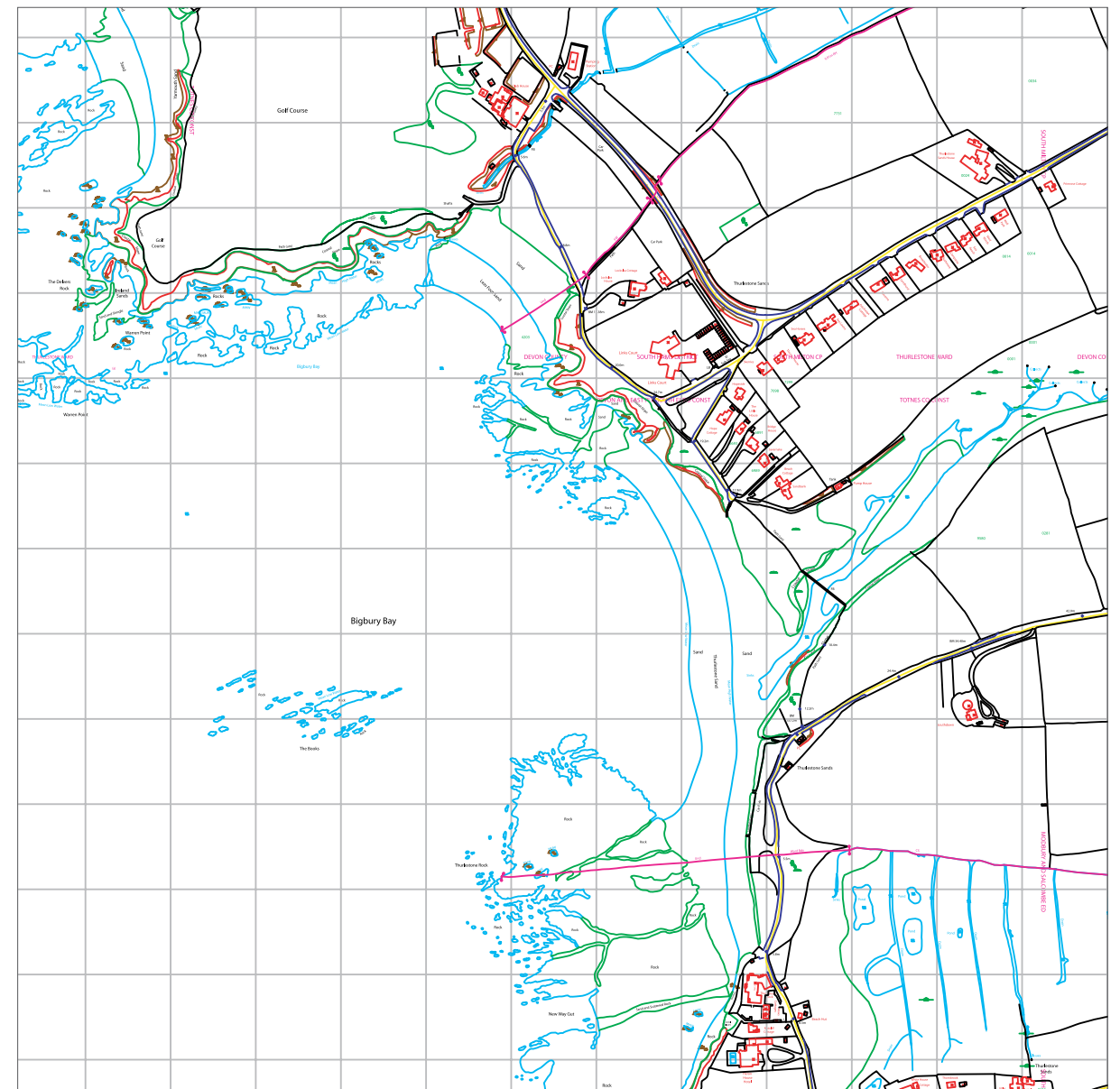
Step 3: orientation, colour and labels

The map should be orientated to relate to the actual environment. The map should also reflect the position of the sign on the beach.

Colour should be added to the map in accordance with the colour palette shown (page 43); these colours have been specially selected. Text labels and symbols (see Symbols directory) should be added as shown and in accordance with the sizes specified and the 'You are here' point should be clearly marked as shown.

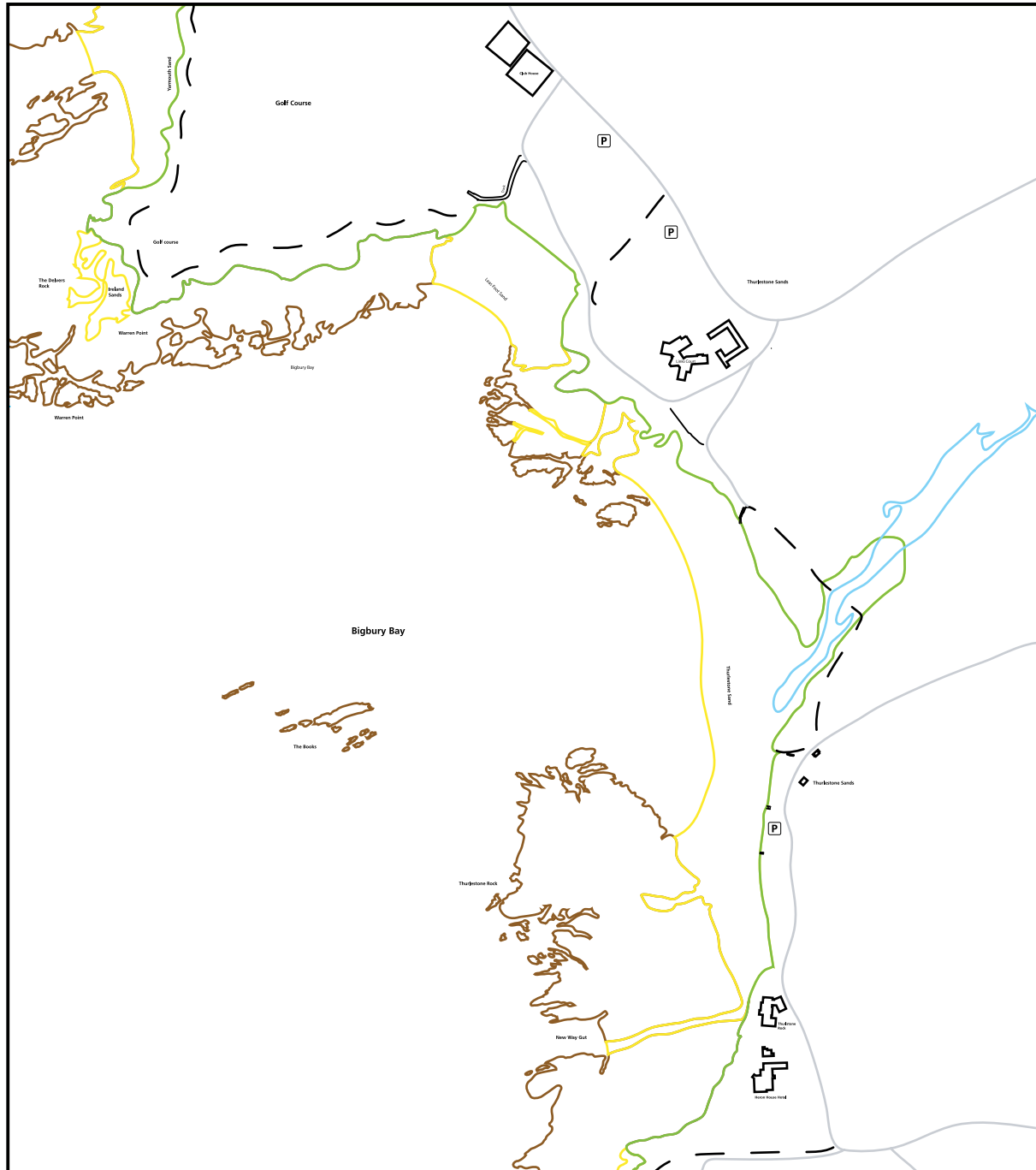
The maximum dimensions for the finished map are 380mm x 520mm.

Step 1: obtain your OS map

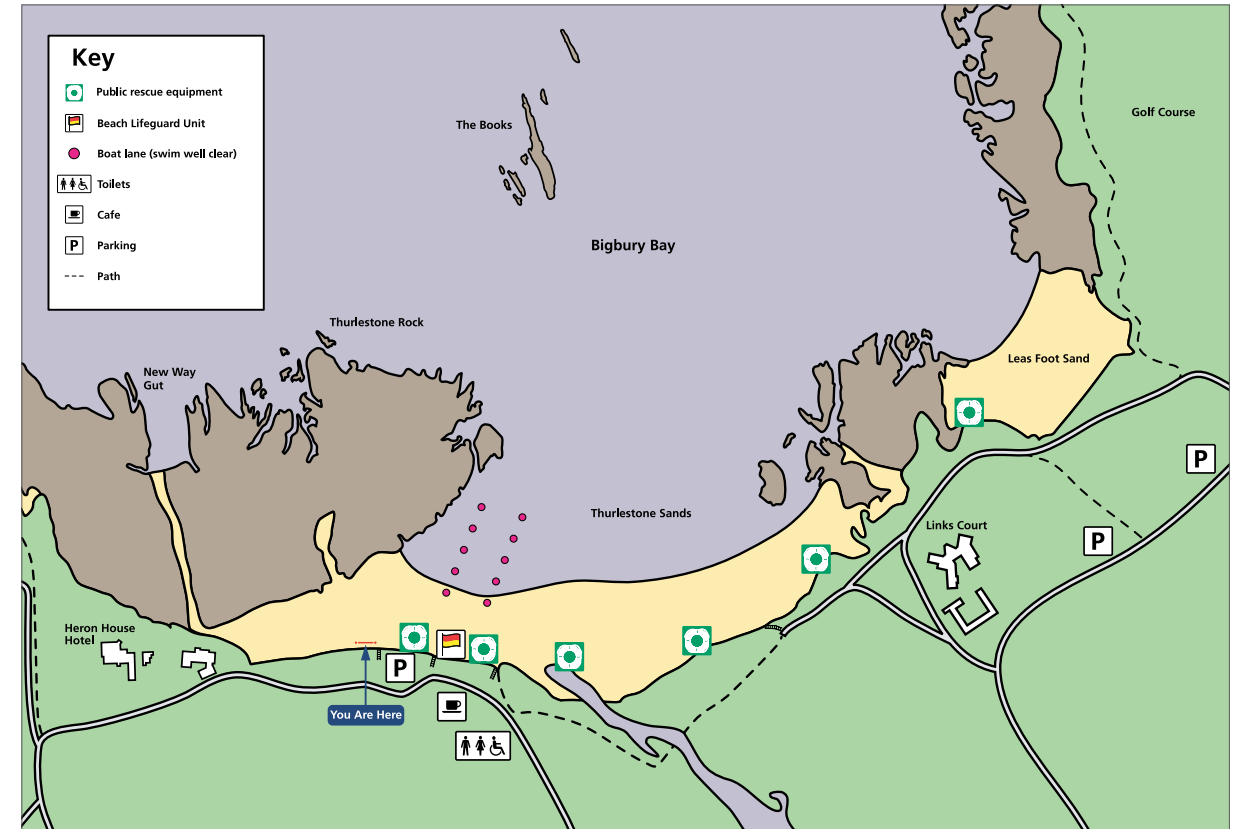








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Step 2: simplify the map



Step 3: orientation, colour and labels



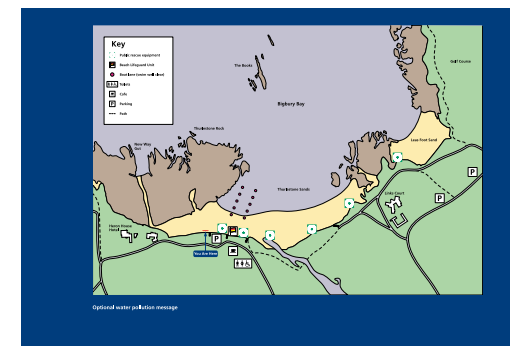
 Pantone 281 C, 20%	 Pantone 109 C, 40%	 20% black	Smaller type = 3.4mm cap height
 Pantone 7530 C, 70%	 Pantone 361 C, 50%	 12mm	Larger type = 4.4mm cap height

Map positioning and optional text underneath

Position the map between the margins of the blue panel on the style of Primary sign you are using.

Underneath the map there is an optional area for a water pollution message. Please provide a statement that is appropriate to the local beach area such as:

1. Warning: Possible sewage overflows during and following heavy rain. Avoid swimming at this time.
2. Warning: Avoid swimming for 24 hours after heavy rainfall or when there are visible signs of storm water or sewage pollution.
3. Warning: Avoid swimming for 24 hours after heavy rainfall. Possible sewage overflows.
4. Warning: Avoid swimming for 24 hours after heavy rainfall. Bacteria levels may exceed health standards.



For other information that can be displayed regarding criteria for beach awards please contact the award operator.

Placing signs

When deciding which signs you need for your beach and where to place them it is important to consider the beach size and the risk assessment. You may not need to use all of the sign types shown in this guide.

For ease of understanding, this guide groups beaches into two categories – rural and resort. It is appreciated that your beach may have features of both groups, but these examples should help you decide where to place signs on your beach. The illustrations on the opposite page show a rural beach and a resort beach; the red markers on the illustrations represent typical sign fixing positions and are defined below.

- P Primary entrance sign
- S Secondary entrance sign
- R Reminder sign
- M Mobile sign
- D Directional sign (for example, directing to the lifeguard facility)
- SO Symbol-only sign (for example, warning of a particular hazard or location of public rescue equipment)

Advice about placing signs

When deciding on a fixing location for your signs it is important to consider the following advice:

Primary and Secondary entrance signs

Ground-mounted signs (for example, primary entrance signs) must be fixed adjacent to the footway rather than directly on the footway. If the signs are fixed on the footway they will create an obstruction. Care should be taken to ensure that the visibility of the reverse of these signs is maximised.

Reminder signs

It is important that these signs are placed at regular intervals along the beach in between entrance points. The distance between signs will depend on how busy the beach gets and the results of the risk assessment. These signs should face the beach rather than the access points, or be fitted alongside facilities such as toilets or cafes. These signs are aimed at people already on the beach.

Mobile signs

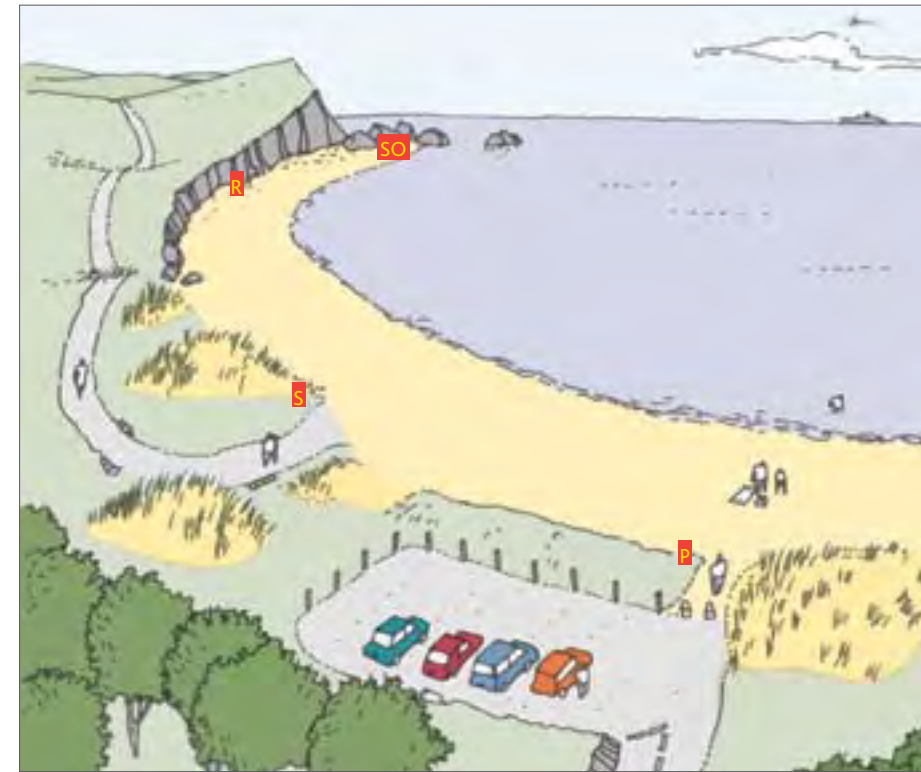
Mobile signs should be located near the lifeguard service units to allow the lifeguard to keep the information up to date. Lifeguards may also use these signs as a teaching aid. The signs should be stored in the lifeguard unit outside lifeguard service hours.

Directional signs

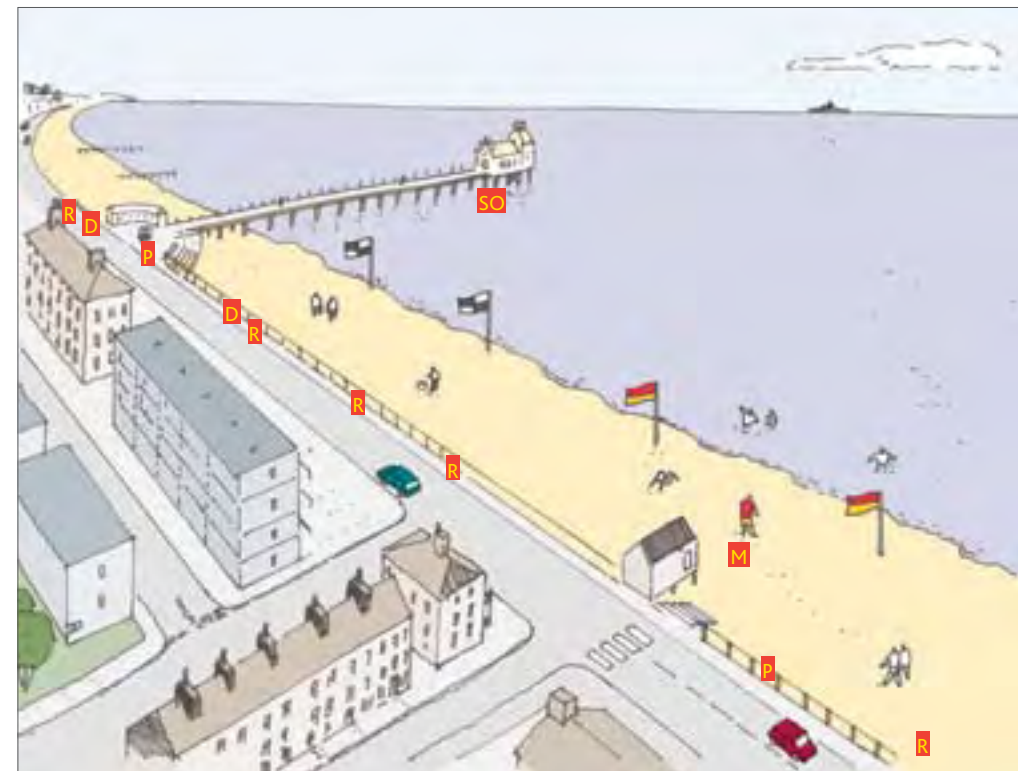
Directional signs should be used to direct to key facilities such as the lifeguard service unit. Directional signs should be placed at regular intervals along the beach and at any points where the beach user has to change direction.

Symbol signs

Symbol signs are likely to be placed in isolation alongside a particular hazard or danger: for example, 'no diving' from the pier shown on the resort beach illustration on the opposite page might be fixed along the railings of the pier.



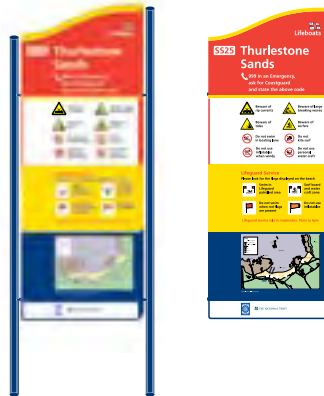
Rural beach



Resort beach

Fixing methods

Some signs have a variety of fixing options, whereas others are more limited. The options are outlined below and you should select the most appropriate to suit your site and needs. All fixing posts should be blue Pantone 281 C.



Primary entrance sign: single panel

The single panel sign has two fixing options.

Post mounted

Mounted using two posts with cross-support bars as shown on the left. The posts measure 2362mm and 2555mm in height and the sign panel should be 500mm from the ground. The side-by-side two panel option is mounted using three posts with cross-support bars (see bottom left page 18).

Wall mounted

This sign design can be made as a single-sided tray sign and mounted directly to the wall. The sign should be positioned 500mm from the ground.



Primary entrance sign: double panel

There is only one way of fixing the double panel sign and that is to fix it to one post with cross-support bars. The post should measure 2730mm in height and the top of the post should be red Pantone 032 C and yellow Pantone 109 C as shown on the left. The panels should be positioned 650mm from the ground.



Primary entrance sign: triangular unit

There is only one way of fixing the triangular sign unit and that is to fix it to three posts with cross-support bars. The posts should measure 2180mm in height and the panels should be positioned 800mm from the ground.



Secondary entrance sign

These signs can be wall mounted, fixed to railings or to single or double posts. The panels should be positioned 1200–1500mm from the ground.



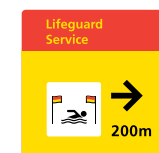
Reminder sign

These signs can be wall mounted, fixed to railings or a fence. A vertical version can be fixed to single or double posts if this is desirable. The panels should be positioned 1200–1500mm from the ground.



Mobile sign

There are two options for a mobile sign. If it is double sided it should be fixed within a standard swing frame. Alternatively each side of the mobile sign can be produced as a single-sided sign and wall mounted.



Directional and Symbol signs

These signs can be wall mounted, fixed to railings, a fence or to a single post. The post should measure 2180mm in height and the panels should be positioned 1200–1500mm from the ground.

Sign manufacture

There are many materials, processes and methods for producing signs, and manufacturers often specialise in specific materials or products. It is a good idea to work with your chosen sign manufacturer to ensure you make the most effective use of your budget.

The visuals on pages 49, 50, and 51 show the ideal manufacturing options for each of the sign types. Tray and/or plate signs are illustrated. When considering the options please use the design intent information (shown on the following pages) and discuss with your chosen sign manufacturer.

Materials and graphics

The material and the process used to apply graphics are the two main factors that affect the cost and performance of a sign. The choice of material affects how the graphics are applied; talk to your chosen sign manufacturer and they will be able to give you some costs and more detailed information. Options are noted below with some advantages and disadvantages.

Aluminium with stove enamel finish is sturdy and hard wearing; the enamel gives a durable matt finish. Graphics can be applied by vinyl or screen printing. Vinyl is available in a range of grades, which affects durability and colour-fade resistance. An anti-graffiti film or UV resistant clear varnish can be applied. In general terms vinyl may be cheaper for a one-off sign whereas screen printing will give better value with larger quantities.

A *high-quality digital vinyl print* can be applied to aluminium before an anti-graffiti film is applied. Care should be taken to ensure your chosen sign manufacturer offers a high-quality digital service.

Composite plastic/aluminium is a lightweight option, although not always better value. Stove enamel and graphics can be applied as noted above.

Foamex/PVC may provide the cheapest option, but will not be very durable. The graphics can be applied as vinyl, but will be very susceptible to damage. Care should be taken over the sign finish – a matt finish will allow easier reading of the graphics.

Cost saving

Bulk ordering will always reduce the overall cost of a sign system. You should consider ordering signs for more than one beach at a time, or link up with other beach operators/owners and place your orders with the same sign manufacturer.

Maintenance

It is important that a regular maintenance programme is in place to ensure your signs remain in a good, legible condition. The frequency of cleaning will depend on the sign manufacturing method chosen and the weather. Maintenance should include cleaning with the recommended solutions and also repair if necessary. Your sign manufacturer will be able to give you specific maintenance advice.



Primary entrance sign: single panel

Tray sign minimum 20mm depth. If it is double sided two trays must be fitted back to back. Signs have radius corners for safety. Powder-coated posts can be aluminium or steel. If steel is used it must be galvanised first.



Primary entrance sign: double panel

Two tray sign fitted back to back to form one panel, minimum 20mm tray depth. Signs have radius corners for safety. Powder-coated posts can be aluminium or steel. If steel is used it must be galvanised first.



Primary entrance sign: triangular unit

Three tray signs minimum 20mm tray depth. Signs have radius corners for safety. Powder-coated posts can be aluminium or steel. If steel is used it must be galvanised first.



Secondary entrance sign

Tray or plate, single or double sided. If double sided and tray then fit two back to back. Signs have radius corners with smooth edges – this is particularly important if it is a plate sign.



Directional and Symbol signs

Plate sign single or double sided, 3mm depth. Signs have radius corners with smooth edges.



Reminder sign

Tray or plate, single or double sided. If double sided and tray then fit two back to back. Signs have radius corners with smooth edges – this is particularly important if it is a plate sign.



Mobile sign

Plate sign double sided, 3mm depth. Signs have radius corners with smooth edges. White wipe board area on reverse on which to handwrite daily information.

Safety flags on beaches tell beach users about beach conditions and indicate the location of swimming and aquatic activity zones.

The procedure for selecting and specifying flags is a simple one and is summarised over the following pages.

Flags



Flags and placing flags

There are two categories of beach safety flags: those indicating dangerous conditions and those indicating zones on the beach suitable for particular activities.

Red and yellow flags, and black and white flags, are zone flags and should be used in pairs to indicate the extent of the zone. The positions of red and yellow flags should be designated by a qualified lifeguard.

Red flags and orange truncated cones indicate dangerous conditions and should be used singly. It is important to ensure that only one red flag is displayed on a beach or area of beach, as two red flags could be mistaken as indicating a safe zone to swim.

More detailed information about the specification of beach safety flags can be found in the British Standards documents BS 8504 and BS ISO 2076 (see contact details inside back cover).

Material

The flags should be manufactured from polyester as defined in BS ISO 2076.

Colorimetric, photometric and colour fastness properties of the material must be considered; specification concerning these can be found in BS 8504.

Mounting position

Each flag should be attached to a pole, with the base of the flag no less than 2.3m above the immediately surrounding ground level. Flags should be positioned so they can be seen from the beach and water with ease: for example, they should not be obscured by trees or structures.

Hoisting and taking down of flags

The hoisting and taking down of flags should be carried out by a nominated person who has experience of the local conditions and activities. Conditions should be monitored during the course of the day and the flags changed or moved accordingly.

Flags should only be displayed during publicised hours each day and relate to seasonal activities.

Inspection and maintenance

The flags and poles should be inspected and maintained on a regular basis. Once a flag has become faded or torn it should be replaced.

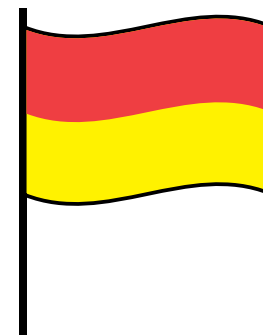
Storage

When flags are stored at the end of a season, care must be taken to ensure they are stored in a dry condition and away from sources of heat or chemicals.

Explanatory text

It is recommended that beach safety signs are installed on the beach displaying the meanings of the flags. Examples of such signs can be seen on pages 10 to 37 of this guide.

Red and yellow flag

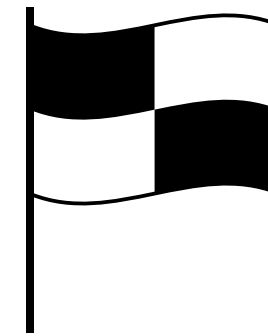


Meaning Lifeguard-patrolled swimming and body boarding zone or lifeguard on duty

Function To signify a swimming and body boarding zone that has a lifeguard patrol or to signify that a lifeguard is on duty

Colour and shape Red and yellow rectangle divided horizontally into two halves: red half at the top Pantone 186 C and yellow half Pantone 109 C
Minimum size 750mm x 900mm
Maximum size 1500mm x 1800mm

Black and white flag

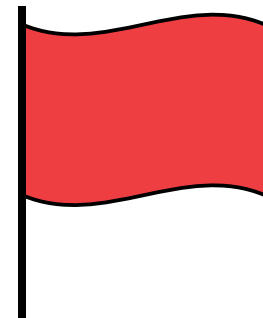


Meaning Surfboard and other water craft zone or zone boundary

Function To signify a zone, or boundary of a zone, designated for use of surfboards and other water craft

Colour and shape Black and white rectangle divided into four equal rectangles: two black and two white, upper black rectangle at the pole side
Minimum size 750mm x 900mm
Maximum size 1500mm x 1800mm

Red flag

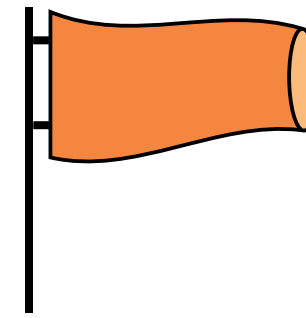


Meaning Dangerous conditions: do not enter the water

Function To signify a severe hazard, that water conditions are unsafe for swimming and other water activities, and people should not enter the water

Colour and shape Red rectangle, Pantone 186 C
Minimum size 750mm x 900mm
Maximum size 1500mm x 1800mm

Orange cone



Meaning Danger: no inflatables to be used on the water

Function To signify the danger of using inflatables in windy or unsafe water conditions

Colour and shape Orange truncated cone, Pantone 166 C
Minimum length 1500mm
Minimum diameter 250mm at the small end and 500mm at the larger end

Additional information





Unique Beach Location Code

The coding of Primary entrance signs is a new scheme introduced at various locations throughout the UK. The Unique Beach Location Code (UBLC) gives each sign a precise location that will help the emergency services locate an incident. You will also find this numbering system a useful reference code when managing your beach safety signs.

Please contact your local emergency services to determine if the UBLC scheme is operating in your local area. The Coastguard will be a useful starting contact.

At the back of this guide you will find a list of suggested local authority abbreviations that will help you form your UBLCs or assist when updating your current coding system. If your local authority is featured in the abbreviations list please start from Step 2; if not, please start from Step 1.

Step 1

Take the first and last letter from the name of the local authority representing your beach:

For example, Blackpool would be BL.

If your local authority area has two or more names then still use the first and last letters:

For example, Redcar and Cleveland Borough Council would be RD.

If your local authority has a North, South, East, or West as part of its name, use the first letter of this as a prefix to the rest of the code:

For example, East Lindsey would be ELY.

If, after following the above examples, you find that the UBLC abbreviation has already been used then please use the first and last letter from the name as previously and insert one other letter from another part of the name to distinguish it:

For example, Swale Borough Council is SE and Swanage Town Council (which would be SE) is changed to SWE.

Step 2

To compile a numbering system, imagine your local authority area in relation to the rest of the UK and then number your signs on a clockwise basis:

For example, Blackpool's signs would start with number 1 from its neighbour to the south, Wyre, and work north towards Fylde.

Bournemouth's signs would start with number 1 from its neighbour to the east, Christchurch, and work west towards Poole.

Step 3

Put the local authority abbreviation and number(s) together to get your UBLCs for the signs:

For example, Blackpool could have a range from BL1 to BL20 and Bournemouth could have a range from BH1 to BH12.

Step 4

You will find a UBLC registration form at the back of this guide. Complete the form and give it to your local Coastguard contact. To get in touch call 0870 600 6505 or email infoline@mcga.gov.uk. It is very important they are aware of the UBLCs; they will make sure UBLCs are not duplicated elsewhere.

Private beach operators

If you operate a private beach within a local authority area, please get in touch with your local authority and Coastguard contact to ensure consistency before selecting your UBLCs.

Useful reading

You may find it useful to refer to the other recognised documents that relate to signs, symbols and flags:

British Standards

BS 5499-5 *Graphical symbols and signs. Safety signs including fire safety signs. Part 5: Signs with specific safety meanings*

BS 5499-11 *Graphical symbols and signs. Safety signs including fire safety signs. Part 11: Water safety signs*

BS 8501 *Graphical symbols and signs. Public information symbols*

BS 8504-1 and BS 8504-2 *Beach safety flags – Colour, shape and meaning*

BS ISO 2076 *Textiles. Man-made fibres. Generic names*

RoSPA and RLSS UK

Safety on beaches – operational guidelines, 2004

The Health and Safety (safety signs and signals) Regulations

Safety signs and signals, 1996

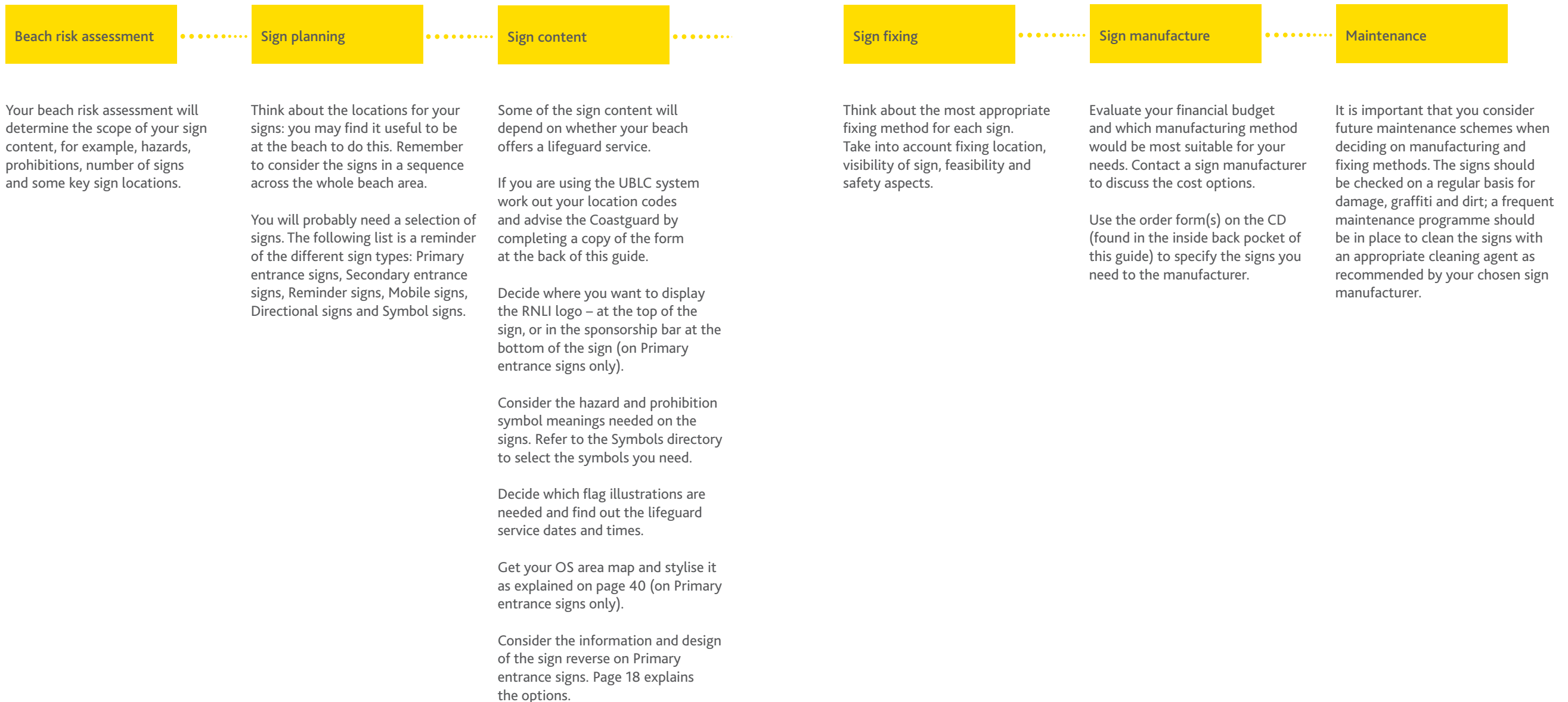
RNLI

A guide to coastal public rescue equipment, 2007



Checklist

Before you place an order for some signs it is worth following this checklist to make sure you have considered everything concerning signage on your beach.



Ordering signs

To help decide your sign requirements, please complete the relevant step-by-step order form(s) found on the CD at the back of this guide. These forms can then be sent to your chosen sign manufacturer as an order. To use the forms you must be familiar with this guide and the signs you want.

Useful contacts

- RNLI Lifeguards
RNLI
West Quay Road
Poole, Dorset
BH15 1HZ
t 0845 122 6999
e beachsafety@rnli.org.uk
w www.rnli.org.uk/beachsafety
- Maritime and Coastguard Agency
t 023 8032 9100
e micmca@mcga.gov.uk
w www.mcga.gov.uk
- Surfers Against Sewage
t 0845 458 3001
w www.sas.org.uk
- National Beach Safety Council
w www.nationalbeachsafety.org.uk
- Surf Life Saving Association of Great Britain
t 0870 075 3911
w www.surflifesavers.org.uk
- BSI – British Standards
t 0208 996 9000
w www.bsi-global.com
- National Trust
t 0870 609 5380
w www.nationaltrust.org.uk
- *National beach award operators*
- Department for Environment Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA)
t 0207 238 6000
w www.defra.co.uk
- Ordnance Survey
t 0845 605 0505
w www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk
- ENCAMS (England and Northern Ireland)
t 01942 612621
w www.encams.org
- Environment Agency
t 0870 850 6506
w www.environment-agency.gov.uk
- Royal Life Saving Society UK
t 01789 773994
w www.lifesavers.org.uk
- Keep Scotland Beautiful
t 01786 471333
w www.cleancoastscotland.org.uk
- Marine Conservation Society
t 01989 566017
w www.mcsuk.org
- The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents
t 0121 248 2000
e help@rospa.com
w www.rospa.com
- Keep Wales Tidy
t 029 2025 6767
w www.keepwalestidy.org

As a charity, the RNLI continues to rely on
voluntary contributions and legacies for its income.
A charity registered in England, Scotland and the Republic of Ireland.