Australian Standard®

Development, testing and implementation of information and safety symbols and symbolic signs

This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee MS/3, Public Information Symbols. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 1 July 1992 and published on 12 October 1992.

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Australian Road Research Board
Bureau of Steel Manufacturers of Australia
Communication Research Institute of Australia
Confederation of Australian Industry
Department of Transport, Queensland
Latrobe University
Roads and Traffic Authority, N.S.W.
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PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Standards Australia Committee on Public Information Symbols to supersede AS 2342.1—1980, *The design and use of graphic symbols and public information symbol signs*, Part 1: *General principles*, AS 2342.2—1980, Part 2: *Method for determining the need for a symbol and for establishing the design criteria*, AS 2342.3—1980, Part 3: *Test procedures for evaluating graphic symbols and symbol signs*, AS 2342.4—1981, Part 4: *Principles for the design of graphic symbols*, AS 2342.5—1980, Part 5: *Design of signs incorporating symbols*, and AS 2342.6—1985, Part 6: *Guidelines for the implementation of symbol sign systems.*

Apart from the incorporation of all six parts of the original Standard into a single Standard for the convenience of users, this edition contains a number of important changes, especially in relation to the procedures for testing the understanding of symbols and symbolic signs. The most profound change is the setting aside of the recall test as the main criterion of acceptance, and its substitution with a comprehension test which scores test symbols according to respondents' initial comprehension of the symbol or symbolic sign at first sighting. The recall test now assumes a secondary or back-up role, and is to be used under specified conditions when the initial comprehension test fails to yield a successful symbol.

The test methods have been revised to include an improved assessment procedure for short-listing test symbols at the outset of testing, a procedure which also incorporates a facility for screening out potentially very poor performers.

Other changes include a revised *Assessment of Need* form and procedure, revised and updated design criteria for symbols and signs, and revised and enhanced detail on the implementation of sign systems.

Some procedures in this Standard have similarities with the provisions for request application and appropriateness ranking of ISO 9186. There are however, significant differences in detail between the provisions of ISO 9168 and those of this Standard.

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FOREWORD

The communication of information by means of graphic symbols or signs incorporating symbols has enjoyed considerable appeal in recent times. The use of symbols for this purpose has been variously promoted as conveying a message more quickly and efficiently than text, as being more legible at longer viewing distances for a given signboard size, and as being understood more readily by people who are poor readers of English. Although these are sound reasons for promoting communication by symbols there is always the concern that either the symbol designs will not be as comprehensible as the promoters might wish, or that attempts will be made to symbolize concepts which are simply not capable of being symbolized, often because the concept is too complex for this medium. Moreover, there is also the likelihood that in some situations, the display of text rather than symbols will provide the more efficient form of communication.

The aims of this Standard are first to encourage communicators to determine objectively, by following a defined procedure, whether a symbol or symbolic sign is the best solution to a problem and, if so, to provide standardized symbol design criteria, and a standardized method of testing the comprehension of the symbol by the target population.

It is believed that by promoting this process, and by maintaining a register of standard symbols in other Australian Standards (e.g. the AS 2899 series) the community's confidence in the use of symbols for communication can be retained, at the same time ensuring that there is no proliferation of untested and hence poorly understood symbols.

STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

Australian Standard

Development, testing and implementation of information and safety symbols and symbolic signs

SECTION 1 SCOPE AND GENERAL

1.1 SCOPE This Standard specifies principles and procedures for determining the need, and the selection, testing and design of graphic symbols which may be—

(a) placed on equipment or parts of equipment to instruct or advise people handling the equipment as to its use and operation;

(b) used in locations where people may work, assemble or move, to give them information or instructions, such as prohibitions, warnings, rules, limits, or directional guidance; or

(c) used in pictorial representations on maps, plans, drawings, illustrations and similar documents.

It also specifies principles and procedures for the design and use of information and safety signs using these symbols.

NOTE: The standardization of letters, numerals, punctuation marks, mathematical signs and symbols and symbols for quantities and units is excluded.

1.2 REFERENCED DOCUMENTS The following documents are referred to in this Standard:

AS
1101 Graphical symbols for general engineering
1102 Graphical symbols for electrotechnology
1319 Safety signs for the occupational environment
1742 Manual of uniform traffic control devices
1742.1 Part 1: General introduction and index of signs
1742.2 Part 2: Traffic control devices for general use
1742.3 Part 3: Traffic control devices for works on roads
1742.4 Part 4: Speed controls
1742.5 Part 5: Street name and community facility name signs
1742.6 Part 6: Service and tourist signs for motorists
1742.7 Part 7: Railway crossings
1742.8 Part 8: Freeways
1742.9 Part 9: Bicycle facilities
1742.10 Part 10: Pedestrian control and protection
1742.11 Part 11: Parking controls
1742.12 Part 12: Bus, transit and truck lanes
1742.13 Part 13: Local area traffic management
1906 Retroreflective materials and devices for road traffic control purposes
1906.1 Part 1: Retroreflective materials
2293 Emergency evacuation lighting in buildings
2700 Colour standards for general purposes
2899 Public information symbol signs
2899.0 Part 0: Consolidated index
2899.1 Part 1: General information signs
2899.2 Part 2: Water safety signs
2899.3 Part 3: Hospital signs
ISO
7001 Public information symbols
9186 Procedures for the development and testing of public information symbols

1.3 DEFINITIONS For the purpose of this Standard the definitions below apply.

1.3.1 Background—that part of a sign immediately behind a symbol or word.

1.3.2 Colour code—one or more colours used symbolically to represent a particular function.

1.3.3 Composite sign—a sign that carries more than one symbol on a signboard, or a sign which comprises any combination of symbols, words and arrows on the one signboard.

1.3.4 Conspicuity of a sign—the extent to which a sign is more easily noticed than anything else in the visual field.