



Department of Veterans Affairs

Veterans Health Administration
Washington, DC 20420

VA Signage Design Guide

PREPARED BY

e n g l u n d

D E S I G N W O R K S i n c .



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Trim width of paper to match spine width of binder pocket.



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Introduction

This Signage Design Guide updates the previous Environmental Graphics Design Program Guide published in September 1996.

It provides guidelines for the design of signs and provides detailed information on the development of a signage system to assist VA veteran customers, visitors, and others as they approach the property, locate buildings, and proceed to functions inside.

The Signage Design Guide has been completely updated. These revisions are the result of regulatory changes, including UFAS, ADAG, and NFPA, expansion and growth of VA facilities, procedural changes, and practical knowledge gained from field experience. Complete new sections have been added to address the needs of VA facilities considering both small room renumbering programs and/or a complete upgrade of their existing signage. These sections inform program officials, planners, and designers how to identify the need for a signage program and steps on interviewing and selecting an environmental graphics design firm. It also includes an in depth section on parking lots and parking structures. The following are highlights in both the updated sections and the newly added sections:

- Updates to facility names on site identification signs, including consolidated Medical Centers, Congressionally named facilities, combined VHA and VBA facilities, outpatient clinics, community based outpatient clinics, and VBA regional offices;
- Expanded construction details for exterior signs;
- Special sub-sections devoted to National Cemetery signs;
- A new section, "Parking Lots and Parking Structures". This section includes signs, details, construction, and installation specifications;
- Signage related to a HopTel;
- A new section on room re-numbering with criteria and implementation on room re-numbering as well as offering suggestions on fixing "broken" room numbering systems;
- Various interior and exterior sign types and their specifications, construction, and installation guidelines;
- A new section titled, "Need a New Sign Program" that assists a facility in the project process from beginning to end, including all the steps from identifying the need for a new sign program through implementing the new program. Subsections include sample questions for interviewing a prospective Environmental Graphics Design Firm, rating factors, sample of Statement of Work, etc.; and
- Expanded Code & Life Safety signs section that includes a pictorial for installation of stairwell signs and other associated signs;
- Mandatory VA policy signs that contain specific text, layout, size, placement, and location requirements that cannot be altered or changed;
- Specialty signs that include freestanding signs for display of various information, card and file holders, and door knob signs for multipurpose uses;
- Examples of marquee signs that incorporate electronic messages;

This has been a collaborative effort, with extensive input from VAMC and VISN officials, VACO program officials including designers, fire and safety, security and law enforcement professionals, and other Veterans Health Administration, National Cemetery Administration, and Veterans Benefits Administration staff. This will be a living document that will be periodically updated. When significant changes do occur, "Design Alerts" will be e-mailed with the included changes.

Lloyd H. Siegel, FAIA Associate Chief Facilities Management Officer for Strategic Management
August 2005

Acknowledgments

This program guide for the Department of Veterans Affairs has involved input and work from central VA, the three Administrations, VA Medical Centers, many departments, and individuals. Particular thanks are expressed to the following special participants during the preparation of this guide and acknowledges their very lasting deliberations, hard work, and thoughtful enthusiasm:

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Keith Bednar	Chief, Environmental Management Service VAMC Madison, Wisconsin
Mary Elizabeth Boyd	Environmental Programs Service Strategic Management Office, FM
Orest Burdiak	Lead Interior Designer VAMC West Side, Chicago, Illinois
Ken Carrico	Project Manager Veterans Benefits Administration
Kevin Doyle	Criminal Investigator VA Security and Law Enforcement
Ken Faulstich	Safety & Fire Protection Engineer Veterans Health Administration
Keith Frost	Security Specialist VA Security and Law Enforcement
Lewis Sinclair	Architect National Cemetery Administration
Design Consultant	Englund Designworks Inc. Pleasant Hill, California



Design Elements

- **Typeface**
 - **Letterspacing**
 - **Logo Signature**
 - **Seal**
 - **Arrow**
 - **Colors**
 - **Metric**
 - **Languages**
-

The Department of Veterans Affairs sign system has been designed using a selected group of common graphic elements and visual standards.

The graphic elements include the Department of Veterans Affairs logo signature and seal, three versions (weight and style) of the Helvetica typeface and specifications for letter and word spacing. Visual standards include: colors and finishes, and letter size in relation to viewing distance.

These standards become the component building blocks around which signs are configured. They have been adopted to provide a functional consistency in signs for the Department of Veterans Affairs.

If specialized or unique sign applications require deviation from these standards, as applied to signs, contact the Department of Veterans Affairs, Facilities Management or Environmental Management Services.

Components

Design Elements

Typeface

Helvetica Medium is the standard typeface for the VA Sign System and will be used predominantly throughout the sign program. Signs identifying permanent rooms shall be in all caps with accompanying Grade 2 Braille. All other signs are to maintain an upper and lower case (Initial Caps) format.

Overhead signs shall be Helvetica Condensed Medium.

The secondary language of a multilingual sign shall be Helvetica Regular.

Building Standard - Helvetica Bold

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890**

Second Language - Helvetica Regular

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890

Overhead Signs - Helvetica Bold Condensed

**ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ
abcdefghijklmnopqrstuvwxyz
1234567890**

Letterspacing

Normal letter spacing is utilized when the readability ratio factor (capital letter height in inches to maximum readable viewing distance in feet) is 1:25 for a word using upper and lower case letters. Word spacing shall be equivalent to the width of a lower case "v".

Normal letter spacing should not be used when letter forms are to be illuminated as light bleed causes letters to fuse together visually.

Distance letter spacing shall be utilized when the copy content is intended for readability at greater viewing distances than normal letter spacing allows. The readability ratio factor is 1:40. Distance letter spacing shall be used for all exterior & illuminated signs.

Normal Spacing

<u>Correct Spacing</u>	<u>Spacing is too tight</u>	<u>Spacing is too loose</u>
Administration	Administration	Administration
<u>Correct Spacing</u>	<u>Spacing is too tight</u>	<u>Spacing is too loose</u>
Administration	Administration	Administration

Distance Spacing

<u>Correct Spacing</u>	<u>Spacing is too tight</u>	<u>Spacing is too loose</u>
Building	Building	Building
<u>Correct Spacing</u>	<u>Spacing is too tight</u>	<u>Spacing is too loose</u>
Building	Building	Building

Components

Design Elements

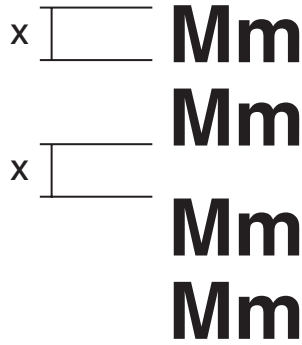
Interline Spacing

Interline spacing will generally be noted on sign type drawings. As a rule, line spacing shall be no less than 1/2 the height of the upper case letter form.



Paragraph Spacing

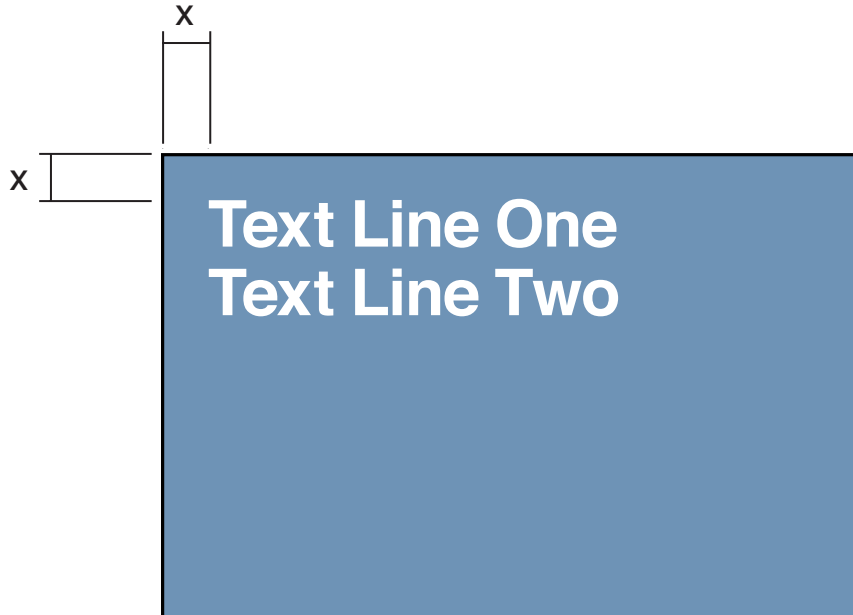
Paragraph spacing will generally be noted on sign type drawings. As a rule, paragraph spacing shall be no less than the height of the upper case letter form.



Alignment

A flush upper left copy format shall be the general rule though certain exceptions shall be noted.

As a rule, all copy placed on inserts, changeable directional modules, listing strips, overhead panels, and changeable exterior panels shall be vertically centered, (equal margins top and bottom) Graphic symbols used in square format shall be centered on four sides.

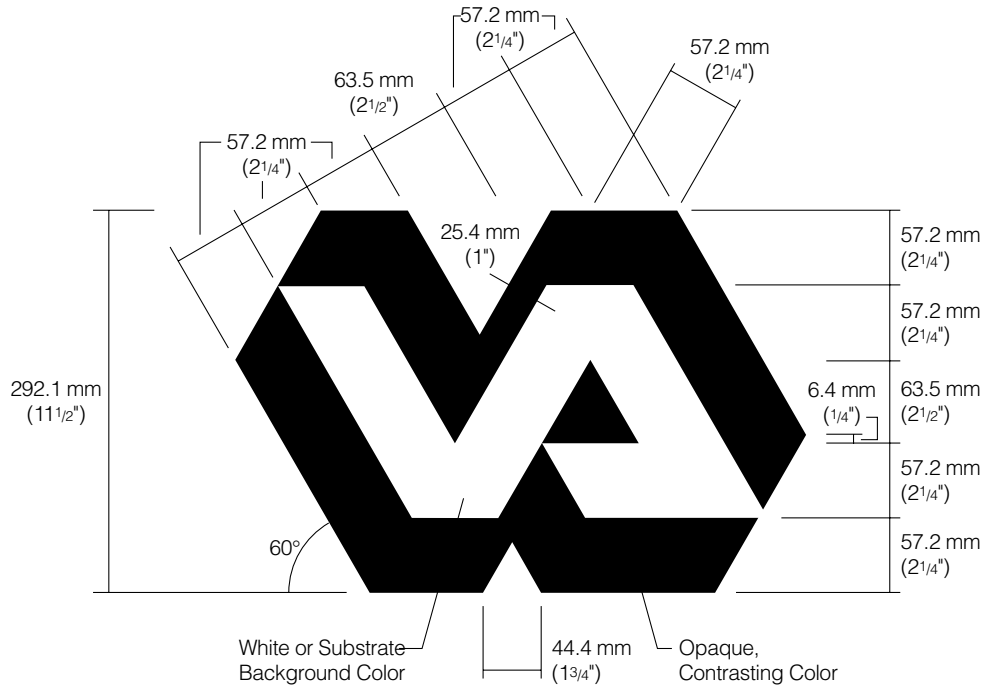


X - Dimensions varies per sign type.
See Sign Type Drawings for exact dimensions

Signature

The signature which includes the VA logo icon and the text shall be presented in a manner consistent with the Department of Veterans Affairs Graphic Standards.

Adjacent configurations are those that are typically acceptable for use with the logo icon. If other configurations of the name and logo icon are desired consult with Washington, DC for prior approval.

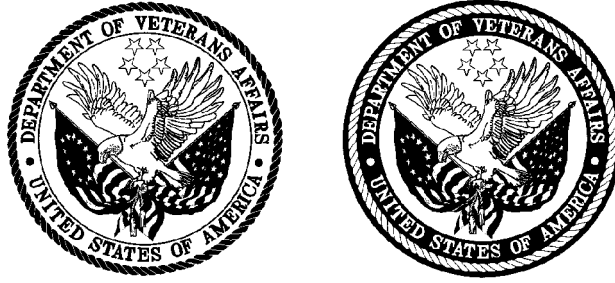


Seal

Adjacent illustrations show the two versions of the Department of Veterans Affairs seal.

The seal is for use on the exterior of the main building of a medical center, or within the main lobby of a Department of Veterans Affairs facility or office.

Refer to VA Technical Information Library on the VA web site for more information on the seal. All seals must conform to master art work which is available from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

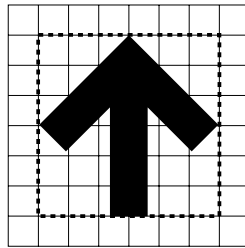


Note: The seal is not to be used on signs.

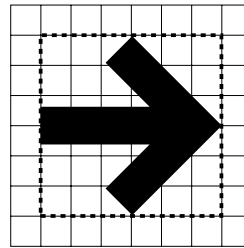
Arrow

Illustrations show the prescribed arrow for use in the VA sign program.

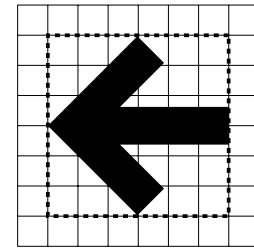
The arrow is always centered within its square field.



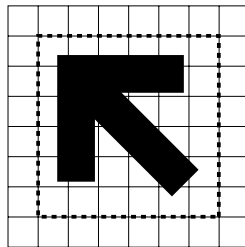
POSITION 1



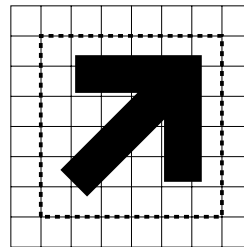
POSITION 2



POSITION 3



POSITION 4



POSITION 5

Arrow Alignment with Text

The arrow is always positioned in such a manner that it is centered in relationship to the capital letter that it precedes. The standard position for arrows, in relationship to text, is either on the left of the first line of text or immediately above the first line of text.

On signs with numerous destinations a single arrow will be placed adjacent to the first line of text to identify the direction for all destinations grouped together.

The arrow size is one and one half (1 1/2) times the capital letter height.



Sign Colors

The adjacent chart and accompanying illustrations provide a listing of sign colors that allow a medical center to coordinate an interior or exterior sign program to the architectural colors and finishes of the buildings on the campus.

All colors listed, are identified by their Pantone codes. These codes were created using the Pantone Formula Guide Solid Uncoated color matching system, which can be found and matched to their CMYK on the Pantone web site: www.Pantone.com.

The color options listed have been selected because they provide contrast between typography and the sign background. Contrast for exterior signs is important for both day and night readability from vehicles. Exterior signs that are not internally illuminated should have reflective white letters.

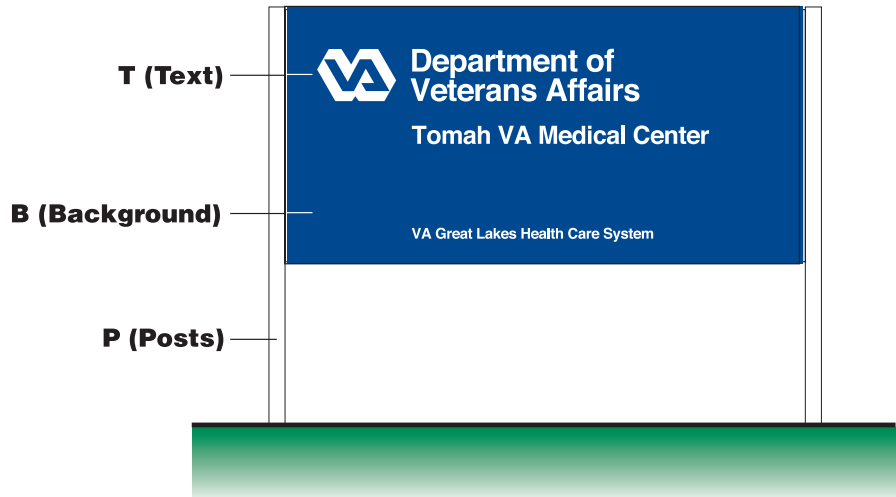
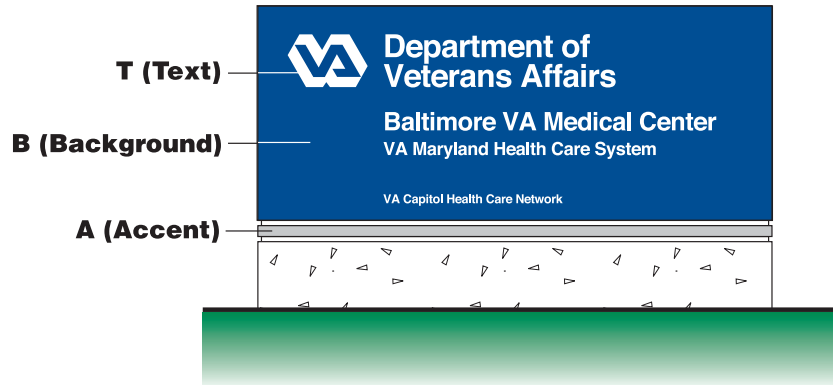
High contrast for readability is equally important for interior signs, especially for the elderly and vision impaired. Light background colors need black or dark gray text and deep or dark colors need white text.

If a facility deviates from the identified family of colors, they should insure that there is sufficient contrast between the typography and sign background under all lighting situations.

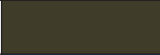

















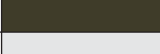



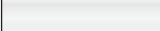

Night and day light conditions for exterior signs can vary a lot so readability should be field verified with actual color samples.

Placement, type of light fixture, sodium and halide lights, warm and cool florescent lights can also change colors and effect contrast so this also needs to be taken into account.

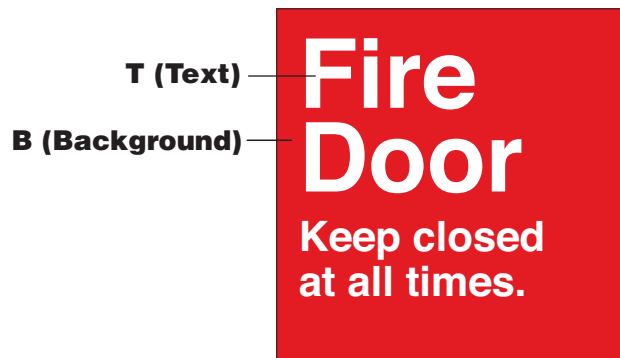
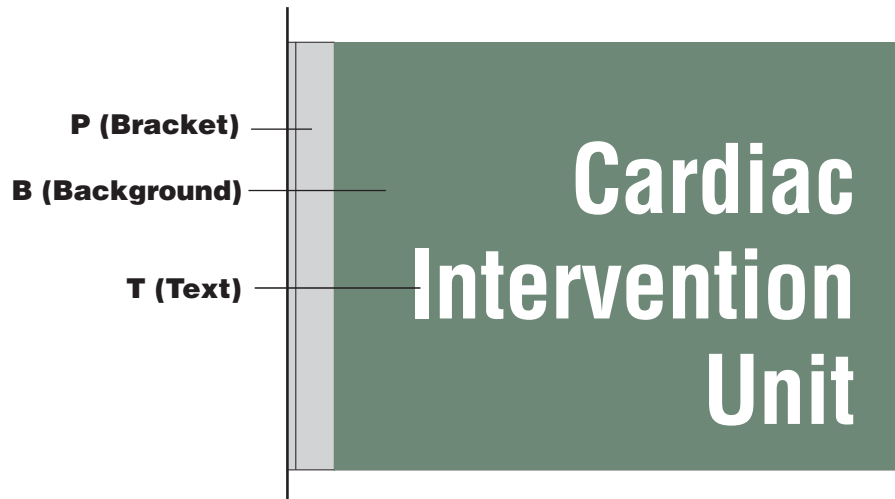
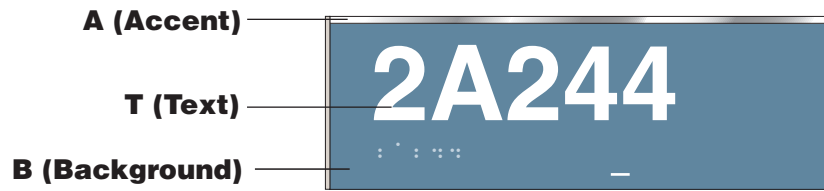
Some of the colors listed can be used for both interior and exterior applications and are so indicated. There are however certain colors that should not be used for interior or exterior signs because of their unsuitability or because they are only for special applications.









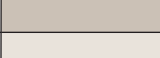











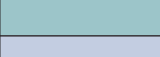
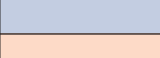

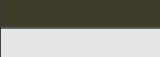


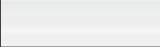


Exterior Sign Background Colors

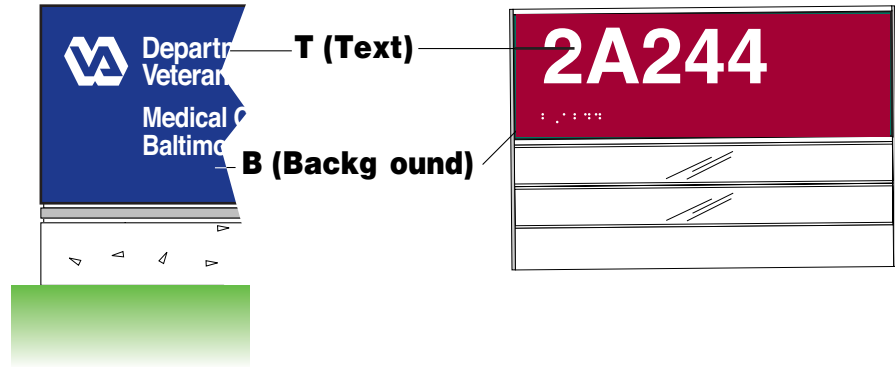
	Color Description	Color #	Color	Pantone #	Recommended Text Color to use	
Exterior Background Colors	Dark Bronze Anodized 313	B1		--	T1 T2 T3	
	Handicapped Blue (Fed #15090)	B2		308U	T1 T2	
	Red (OSHA)	B3		1797U	T1 T2 T3	
	VA Blue (PMS 280)	B4		280U	T1 T2 T3	
	Dark Brown	B5		497U	T1 T2 T3	
	Black	B6		BlackU	T1 T2 T3	
	White	B7		--	Refer to Parking Garage Text Colors	
	Yellow (OSHA)	B8		108U	T4	
	Graphite	B9		419U	T1 T2 T3	
	Dark Blue	B12		295U	T1 T2 T3	
	Burgundy	B13		195U	T1 T2 T3	
	Teal	B14		3165U	T1 T2 T3	
	Dark Green	B15		3302U	T1 T2 T3	
	Brick	B16		1955U	T1 T2 T3	
	Blue Gray	B17		5415U	T1 T2 T3	
	Orange	B18		165U	T1 T2 T3	
	Forest Green	B19		342U	T1 T2 T3	
	Adobe	B20		479U	T1 T2 T3	
	Sage Green	B21		5625U	T1 T2 T3	
	Exterior Posts	Dark Bronze Anodized 313	P1			
		Clear Anodized	P2			
White		P3				
Accent	Polished Aluminum	A1				
	Satin Aluminum	A2				

Sign manufacturers may already have product available in some of these colors. Each of the background colors can be custom mixed to match in different types of paint based upon the various application requirements and specifications. Besides these colors, all traffic sign faces should use the prescribed colors as listed in the Manual for Uniform Traffic Control Devices. All OSHA Safety Colors are to meet ANSI specification Z53.1/OSHA.



Interior Sign Background Colors

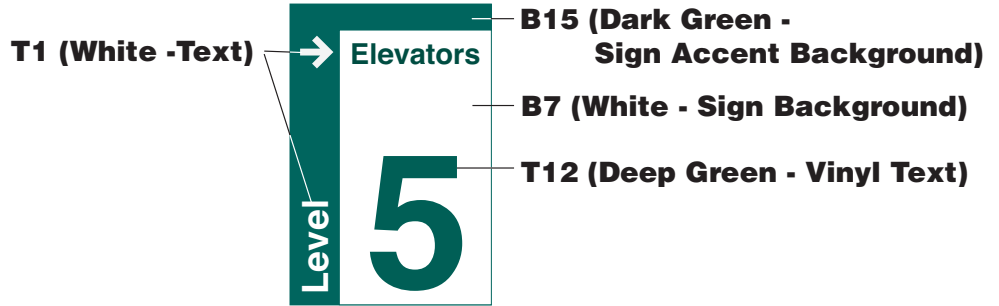
	Color Description	Color #	Color	Pantone #	Recommended Text Color to use	
Interior Background Colors	Red (OSHA)	B3		1797U	T1 T4	
	Dark Brown	B5		497U	T1	
	Black	B6		Black U	T1	
	White	B7			T4 T5 T6 T8	
	Yellow (OSHA)	B8		108U	T4 T5 T7	
	Graphite	B9		419U	T1	
	Gray	B10		401U	T4 T5	
	Putty	B11		Warm Gray 3U	T4 T5	
	Dark Blue	B12		295U	T1	
	Burgundy	B13		195U	T1	
	Teal	B14		3165U	T1	
	Dark Green	B15		3302U	T1	
	Brick	B16		1955U	T1	
	Blue Gray	B17		5415U	T1 T6	
	Antique White	B18		Warm Gray 1U	T4 T5	
	Forest Green	B19		342U	T1 T2 T3	
	Adobe	B20		479U	T1 T2 T3	
	Sage Green	B21		5625U	T1 T2 T3	
	Taupe	B22		4735U	T1 T4 T5	
	Light Green	B23		5503U	T1 T4 T5	
	Light Blue	B24		537U	T1 T4 T5	
	Mauve	B25		7513U	T4 T5	
	End Caps Brackets Stanchions	Dark Bronze Anodized 313	P1			
		Clear Anodized Aluminum	P2			
		Black	P4		Black U	
Accent	Polished Aluminum	A1				
	Satin Aluminum	A2				



Exterior & Interior Text Colors

	Color Description	Color #	Color	Pantone #	Recommended Background Color to use
Exterior Text Color	Gloss White	T1			B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, B9, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17
	Refective White	T2			B1, B2, B3, B4, B6, B9, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17
	Translucent White	T3			B1, B3, B4, B6, B9, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17
Interior Text Color	Gloss White	T1			B3, B5, B6, B9, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17, B18, B19, B20
	Black	T4		Black U	B3, B7, B8, B10, B11, B18, B19, B20, B21
	Graphite	T5		419U	B7, B8, B10, B11, B18, B19, B20, B21
	Red	T6		1797U	B7, B17
	Purple	T7		2425U	B8

For parking garage signs, vinyl colors will be applied to either white or one of the other exterior paint colors. The vinyl color should match the sign accent background exterior paint color. The colors and their respective numbers listed in the chart below accurately match the VA exterior sign paint colors. The vinyls are part of the High Performance Opaque Series by Avery Graphics.



Parking Garage Structure Text Colors Colors

	Color Description	Color #	Color	Pantone #	Recommended Background Color to use
Parking Garage Structure Vinyl Text Colors	Gloss White	T1		--	B3, B4, B12, B13, B14, B15, B16, B17
	A8525-0 Majestic Blue	T8		295U	B7 (White)
	A8520-0 Shadow Blue	T9		5415U	B7 (White)
	A8370-0 Burgundy	T10		195U	B7 (White)
	A8580-0 Sapphire Blue	T11		280U	B7 (White)
	A8690-0 Deep Green	T12		3302U	B7 (White)
	A8350-0 Dark Red	T13		1955U	B7 (White)
	A6835-0 Nautical Blue	T14		3165U	B7 (White)
	A8345-0 Fire Red	T15		187U	B7 (White)

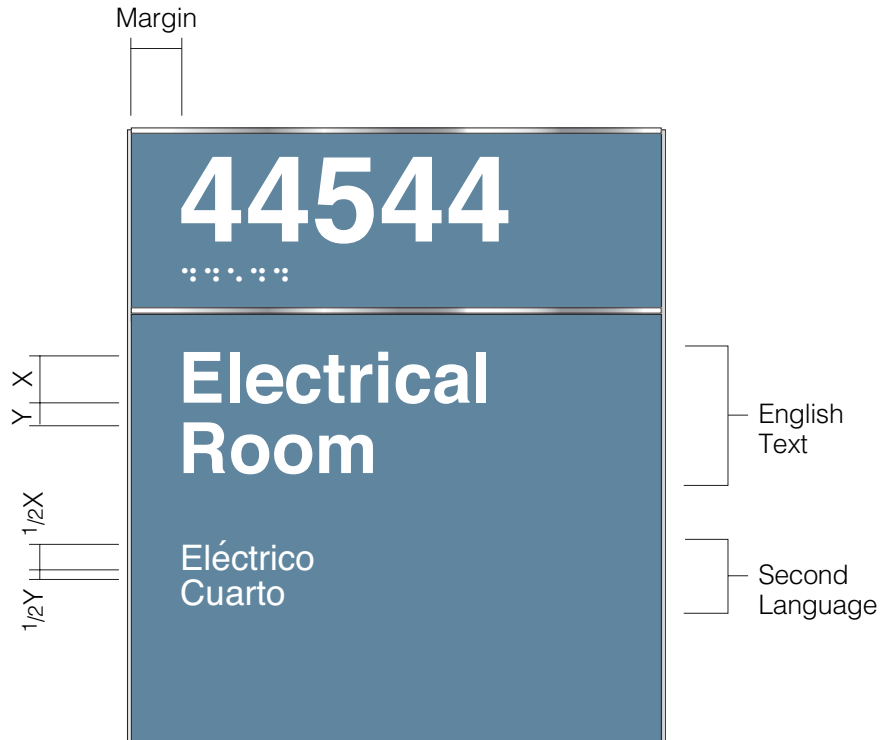
Second Language

The cap height of the English text (see Sign Type Drawings for this dimension) is the basis for determining the cap height of the second language text.

Unless otherwise noted, the second language text is 1/2 the size of the English text.

Unless otherwise noted, the interline spacing of the second language text is 1/2 the interline spacing of the English text.

The second language margin is the same as the margin used for the English text and braille. See the Sign Type Drawings for this dimension.



Metric

The metric system is the preferred system of measurement in accordance with the Metric Conversion Act of 1975, P.L. 94-168, as amended by Section 5164 of Omnibus Trade & Competitiveness Act of 1988 Executive Order 12770.

In accord with the Department of Veteran Affairs metric conversion plan, the sign system is recommended to be constructed in metric, however the English system can be used on VA projects, if it meets the needs of a specific facility. The use of metric should not add cost to a project and "off the shelf" metric sign systems are preferred.

The VA does not intend to impose rigid metric conversions on the sign industry and will support sign manufacturers as their industry converts to the metric standard.

For assistance in transition to metric, the drawings with dimensions have been prepared showing direct metric English conversion. While typography is generally referred to in the graphic industry by point sizes and the sign industry in inches, the VA sign program is showing text layouts developed in inches and then directly converted to metric. It is preferred however, that metric dimensions be rounded to the nearest 1 mm up to 1 inch; 5 mm up to 4 inches; and, above 4 inches rounded to the nearest 25 mm.

The adjacent conversion chart should provide assistance in determining conversions from inches to millimeters.

For further information on the conversation to metric, contact the Department of Veteran Affairs, Facilities Management Office.

Inches	Nearest 1 mm (1/25")	Nearest 5 mm (1/5")	Nearest 5 mm (2/5")	1"= 25mm EXACTLY
1/32"	1			
1/16"	2			
3/32"	2			
1/8"	3			
3/16"	5			
1/4"	6			
5/16"	8			
3/8"	10			
7/16"	11			
1/2"	13			
9/16"	14			
5/8"	16			
3/4"	19			
7/8"	22			
1"	25	25		
1 1/4"	32	30		
1 1/2"	38	40		
1 3/4"	44	45		
2"	51	50		
2 1/4"	57	55		
2 1/2"	64	65		
2 3/4"	70	70		
3"	76	75		
3 1/4"	83	85		
3 1/2"	89	90		
3 3/4"	95	95		
4"	102	100	100	100
5"	127	125	130	125
6"	152	150	150	150
7"	178	180	180	175
8"	203	205	200	200
9"	229	230	230	225
10"	254	255	250	250
11"	279	280	280	275
1'-0"	305	305	300	300
2'-0"	610	610	610	600
3'-0"		915	910	900
4'-0"		1220	1220	1200
5'-0"		1525	1520	1500
6'-0"		1830	1830	1800
7'-0"		2135	2130	2100
8'-0"		2440	2440	2400
9'-0"		2745	2740	2700
10'-0"		3050	3050	3000
15'-0"		4570	4570	4500
20'-0"		6095	6100	6000