

# Shop Safety Color Coding System

**A**GRICULTURAL ACCIDENTS cause injuries and cost millions of dollars in property and equipment damage. Because of the type of work and the machinery, equipment, tools, electricity, temperature extremes, and chemicals involved, agricultural mechanics may never be completely without injuries and property damage, although that is the goal. All agricultural workers should think safety first, focusing on being alert, attentive, responsible, and concerned. To help people remember the huge amount of information required for a safe environment, standard colors have been introduced to represent specific applications and hazards.



## Objective:



Describe the color coding system for shop safety.

## Key Terms:



aluminum	gray	safety green
black-and-white stripes	ivory	vista green
black-and-yellow stripes	orange	white
blue	red	yellow
focal colors	safety colors	

## The Color Coding System for Shop Safety

The color coding system is used to:

- ◆ Remind workers that a danger or hazard is present

- ◆ Find a certain object quickly
- ◆ Create a bright, colorful work environment
- ◆ Encourage a clean, orderly work area
- ◆ Improve emergency response times

Each color conveys a specific message, based on a standardized code. The code was created through the cooperative effort of many national organizations. Two primary organizations involved in creating the code were the American Society of Agricultural Engineers (ASAE) and the American Vocational Association Safety Committee. **Safety colors** are designed to alert workers to potential hazards.

Nine safety colors and three focal colors have been adopted. Learning the colors is an important step to shop safety and efficiency.

## SAFETY COLORS

Understanding the color code for agricultural shops can help workers identify switches, control knobs, adjusting handles, and hazardous areas. Additionally, introducing color into a work area creates an attractive place to work. The colors used to mark agricultural shops are much easier to identify than text messages. When color, along with universal symbols, is incorporated into an agricultural shop, safety becomes less dependent on the need to read signs. This is helpful with an international workforce that may not read English as the primary language. The key is to learn the color code and encourage everyone to adopt it.

The safety colors are:

- ◆ Red
- ◆ Orange
- ◆ Yellow
- ◆ Blue
- ◆ Safety green
- ◆ Gray
- ◆ White
- ◆ Black-and-white stripes
- ◆ Black-and-yellow stripes

**Red** represents danger and identifies dangerous areas on machines. An example of a dangerous area on a table saw is the area around the blade. The insert is colored red to call attention to

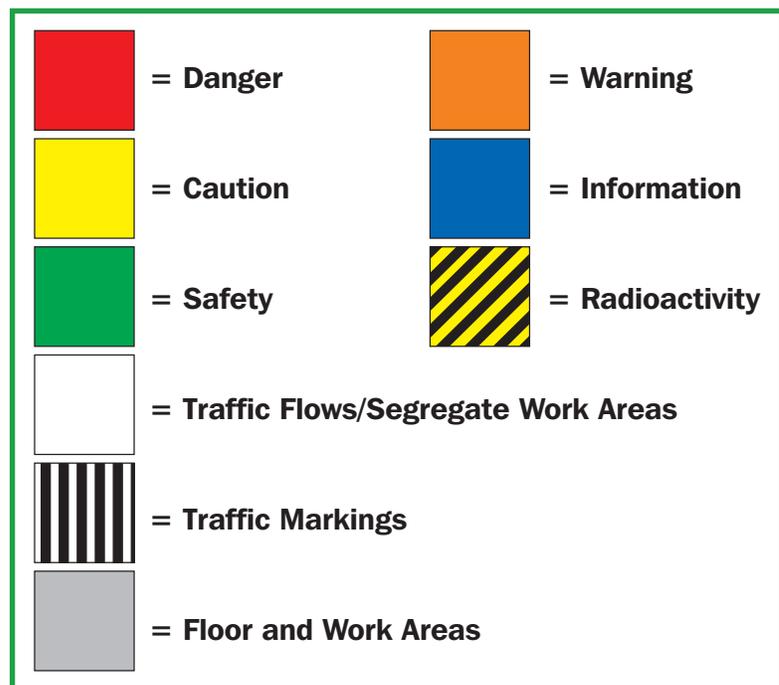


FIGURE 1. The nine safety colors.

this very dangerous area. Fire equipment, safety switches, and other types of emergency equipment are red.

**Orange** signifies warning. The safety color code assigns orange to identify machine hazards, such as edges and openings. Electrical controls, switches, and levers have orange backgrounds.

**Yellow** reminds people to use caution. The yellow signal in a traffic light means caution; this association should be extended to machines in a shop. Levers and adjustment knobs are yellow.

**Blue** signifies information. Signs informing the user that a machine is “out of order” are blue. A blue sign on a machine informs the operator of something that requires extra attention.

**Safety green** is a special shade that means safety. Safety equipment is identified by safety green. Safety green is also used for first aid, safety areas, and areas where medical treatment is given.

**Gray** is used on work area floors. It is relaxing and contrasts with other colors. Another use for gray is to color tabletops and the bodies of machines. When gray is used as a background, the contrast with other colors allows good visibility and easy color recognition.

**White** marks traffic flow. Traffic flow is indicated with white arrows. White can also be used around work areas in a shop.

**Black-and-white stripes** mark traffic and housekeeping. The stripes are often applied diagonally. Black-and-white checkers are sometimes used for traffic markers.

**Black-and-yellow stripes** applied in a diagonal pattern identify radioactivity. Agricultural workers should associate the black-and-yellow stripes with radioactive hazards.



FIGURE 2. A black-and-white striped traffic marker.

## FOCAL COLORS

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The **focal colors** are:

- ◆ Ivory
- ◆ Vista green
- ◆ Aluminum

The function of these colors is to provide contrast for the safety colors. An added benefit of using focal colors is the pleasing and attractive appearance they create in a work area. Focal colors help draw workers' attention toward large items, like machines, cabinets, and floors.

**Ivory** is used to improve visibility because of the contrast between ivory and the other shop colors. **Vista green** is sometimes used as the body color on machines instead of gray. Many stationary tools are painted vista green. It is one of the cool colors and considered a good color for work environments. **Aluminum** is used on waste containers.

## Summary:



Prevention of injury or property loss while workers are performing routine tasks can be improved by introducing color. The use of colors to mark hazards makes workers respond correctly and more quickly. Learning the approved color code helps in associating specific hazards with uniform applied colors. Color recognition has the added benefit that workers do not need to read, making it helpful with an international workforce that may not read English as the primary language.

## Checking Your Knowledge:



1. Explain how color can promote shop safety?
2. List the nine safety colors and give the meaning of each.
3. List the three focal colors and give the meaning of each.

## Expanding Your Knowledge:



Create a list of items in the school shop that comply with the safety color code. Then, create a list of items that do not comply. Work with your agricultural mechanics instructor to see that appropriate color coding is used throughout the shop.

## Web Link:



### Safety Color Code

[www.cas.psu.edu/docs/CASDEPT/aged/courses/AGED418/articles/s5/s5b.html](http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/CASDEPT/aged/courses/AGED418/articles/s5/s5b.html)