

**Exit signs Part 3 - Exit sign symbols**

In a previous fire column I discussed the requirements for exit signs including how to assess what size the sign should be. This article considers what the acceptable form of symbol can be and this has become confusing.

The intention of replacing a worded exit sign such as FIRE EXIT was to provide a universal symbol, which could be understood without the use of text. BS 5499: Part 1 indicates a green silhouette against a white door with an arrow (fig 1). This style is 'preferred' for signs receiving reflected light from the normal and escape lighting fittings. Where the sign is internally illuminated the BS suggests the door and the running persons colours be reversed (fig 2). This is all perfectly clear.

The European directive regarding exit signs included an example of a symbol, showing a white silhouette of a person running toward a white door against a green background. Each member state then had to produce their own local standard for guidance in their own country. The UK published this as the Signs and signals regulations. This document reproduced the example sign directly from the European directive. The regulations gave no guidance regarding any different style for the design when used for reflected light or internally illuminated signs and therefore became directly in conflict with BS 5499 series preferred styles.



Fig 1; BS 5499 recommends for externally illuminated signs - a green figure.



FIG 2; for internally illuminated signs a white figure.



Fig 2; Signs and signals regulations; The running person is always white whatever the method of illumination (left). An alternative design uses only a door and an arrow (right)

BS 5499 suggests the running person be green for reflected light signs and the signs and signals regulations suggest the running person be white in all cases. It is of course difficult to reverse the European design without making the whole sign white, but some have taken a bit of each standard and made an all white sign in fact this is the standard sign we have in the offices where I work. In many instances the BS

design for internally illuminated is used for reflected light signs in other words the opposite to what the BS intended. However it is difficult to criticise this because the European sign only ever has a white person.

There is a third alternative in the signs and signals regulations, which use a door only – white in all cases (Fig 3 - right).

The following table should help identify the correct type of sign.

<b>Type of lighting</b>	<b>Standard</b>	<b>Colour of running person</b>
Externally illuminated	BS 5499	Green against white door
	Signs and signals regulations	White but can be door only
Internally illuminated	BS 5499	White against green door
	Signs and signals regulations	White but can be door only