Symbol Designs And Signal Words:
Importance In Hazard Statements For Procedures

S. Camille Peres†, Sarah Thomas, and Kathryn Tharpe
Department of Environmental and Occupational Health
Texas A&M Ergonomics Center
Texas A&M University
College Station, Texas, 77843-3131

Abstract

Signal words and symbols are often used in hazard statements for procedures to convey safety information to workers. However, little is known about effective display methods for this domain. Two studies were performed, one with a focus on symbol design and another on signal words. For the symbol design, contents of the design (i.e., hazard, consequence, and mitigation) were manipulated to determine any effect on participants' performance of the mitigation methods. For signal words, workers were asked their interpretation of caution, warning, and notes, which were then coded to determine three main themes of the results. Results indicate that the content of the symbol design had no impact on participants' performance of the mitigation step and few workers had the correct definitions for the signal words caution and warning. These results suggest the time spent by procedure writer's determining which signal word is appropriate and what information to provide in hazard symbols is not being spent well and should be used differently.