

Quiet Signs Glossary

A

Abandoned Sign: Any sign, sign structure, advertising structure or display not maintained for a period of 90 days or more. An abandoned sign is deemed to be a public nuisance.

Acrylic: An extruded or cast rigid plastic characterized by its clarity and colorability.

Acrylic: A paint with an acrylic base.

Address Sign: The numeric reference of a structure or use to a street, included as part of a wall or monument sign.

Aesthetics: A term dealing with form, design, and/or quality of construction of a particular sign, building, site or structure that presents a judgmental statement concerning the level of beauty or artistic value.

Adhesive: A material able to hold two surfaces together, often activated by heat or pressure.

Airbrush: A device utilizing compressed air to generate a fine spray of paint.

Alternating Current (AC): One of the three basic forms of electricity. Specifically, a current that changes direction back and forth at some frequency – 60 Hz in the U.S.: 50Hz in Europe – as in electricity that comes from a household wall socket. See also Direct Currents.

Ambient Light: The light in a given area, excluding direct or internal illumination.

Amortization: 1) In accounting terms, this refers to the method in which an intangible asset is depreciated over a specified period of time. 2) In terms relevant to signage and urban planning, it conveys the “grace period” beginning on the date a sign owner is notified that removal of a previously conforming sign has been ordered, and ending on the date removal is required. This process makes a structure, which was legally erected with all permits, legally non-conforming for period of time. After an amortization period, the sign becomes illegal and non-conforming.

Ampere: Often called amps, a unit used to measure electric.

Anchor: In sign making, refers particularly to the fasteners used to secure awnings and fascia signs to facades.

Animated Sign: A sign depicting action, motion, light or color changes through electrical or mechanical means, excluding electronic message center signs.

Anneal: To subject to great heat, and then cool slowly. Neon tubes are annealed after bending to reduce stress in the glass.

Awning Sign: A building mounted sign that provides additional functionality as shelter or shade.

Anodizing: Process by which a protective aluminum oxide layer is applied to an underlying metal using electrolysis.

Application Tape: See transfer tape.

Aqueous Inks: Inks that use water as a carrier.

Argon: An inert gas which when mixed with mercury is used in fluorescent lamps and neon tubes.

B

Backlight Letter: An illuminated reverse channel letter (open or translucent back) so light from the letter is directed against the surface behind the letter, producing a halo lighting effect around the letter. Also referred to as “silhouette lighted” or “halo lighted.”

Backlit Sign: A sign consisting of a cabinet containing a light source surrounded by one or more translucent faces, illuminated for visibility.

Baked Enamel: A type of metal sign finish. A special enamel paint is sprayed or screen-printed on metal surface, dried then cured. The result is an extremely durable surface similar to that found on many appliances.

Banner, Flag, Pennant or Balloon: A material used for advertising purposes attached to or pinned on or from any structure, staff, pole, line, framing, or vehicle, including captive balloons and inflatable signs but not including official flags of the United States, the State of California, and other states of the nation, counties municipalities, official flags of foreign nations and nationally or internationally recognized organizations.

Bench Sign: A sign located on the seat or back of a bench.

Billboard or Outdoor Advertising Sign: A sign structure advertising an establishment, merchandise, service, or entertainment that is not sold, produced, manufactured, located or furnished at the site on which the sign is located. This does not include freeway signs or kiosk signs.

Binder: A substance that binds two others together. For instance, lacquer is used as a binder when painting with some metallic dusts, and many paints require binders.

Bitmap: A representation of a graphics image. A bitmap is a display of rows and columns of dots; the value of each dot (i.e., whether it is filled in or not) is stored as one or more bits of data. Monochrome images can be represented by one bit; colors and shades of gray require more than one bit of data. Bitmap graphics are also known as raster graphics.

Blank: Most commonly, an undecorated face. May also refer to a sign face without any framing or cabinet.

Blackout: Specially formulated paint used to block out the crossover connections between neon letters.

Bombarding: The process of heating the glass and metal portions of a neon tube to a high temperature to release all absorbed gases and other impurities.

Building Code: State and/or local regulations governing public health, welfare and safety of construction and maintenance.

Building Fascia: That portion of any elevation of a building extending vertically from the grade to the top parapet wall or eaves, and horizontally across the entire width of the building elevation, including slanted wall surfaces; sometimes referred to as a “mansard.” If more than one business is located in a single building, then such length shall be limited to that portion which is occupied by each individual business.

Building Mounted Sign: A sign that is applied or attached to a building

Bulletin Colors: Specially prepared enamel paints preferred by many sign painters for hand lettering.

Burning In: Recommended to bring a neon tube to its proper brilliance, burning-in involves connecting the completed tube to a transformer similar to that, which will be used in the installation, and allowing it to remain lighted until proper brightness, color and electrical properties are achieved. Also called “aging.”

Burnish: To polish by rubbing; a common practice in the gilding process.

Bushing: In a neon sign, insulates the electrode from a metal sign. Requires a separate connection between the electrode and the high-voltage line.

C

Cabinet Sign: A sign structure consisting of the frame and face(s), not including the internal components, embellishments of support structure.

Calendered: Vinyl sheeting squeezed between a series of heated rollers (also extruded) to achieve a small-enough thickness for cutting with a knife plotter. Calendered film is generally thicker and less expensive than cast vinyl.

Calibration: Operation of matching color shades and hues between input (design software/monitor/scanner) and output device (printer). Also the operation of keeping colors consistent during printer operations, compensating for changes in humidity, media, toners, etc.

Canopy: See Marquee

Canopy Sign: 1) A building-mounted sign functioning as a marquee. 2) A sign mounted on a marquee or canopy.

Carrier: Substance in which pigments in inks are suspended. Aqueous, solvent and eco-solvent carriers evaporate after print. Monomers are considered carriers in UV-curing inks, but are transformed into solid polymers after curing.

Cast: Vinyl sheeting formed by spreading a molten mixture on a carrier sheet, and then backing at high temperatures to remove solvents and fuse the remaining material into a film. Cast film is usually thinner and more expensive than calendered vinyl.

Changeable Copy Panel: A section of a sign that functions like a changeable copy sign.

Changeable Copy Sign: A variable message sign composed of individual letters panel-mounted in or on a track system.

Channel Letter: Fabricated or formed three-dimension letter that may accommodate a light source.

Chase: 1) The illusion of movement in neon tubes or incandescent bulbs created by turning the light sources on and off in sequence. 2) To decorate metal, typically by engraving or cutting.

Civic Event Sign: A temporary sign, other than a commercial sign, posted to advertise a civic event sponsored by a public agency, school, church, civic-fraternal organizations, or similar non-commercial organization.

CMYK: Cyan, Magenta, Yellow and Black, or the four process colors. Used in screen-printing and by output devices such as inkjets, electrostatics, and thermal-transfer printed.

Color Calibration: Setting a device (digital camera, computer monitor, scanner, color printer or copier, image setter) to known color conditions.

Color Management: Refers to coordination of color with output and display. In output, color management is often handled on a device-by-device basis by imaging production software.

Color Specification: Color values used to numerically specify a color within a color system.

Conduit: A metal or PVC plastic tube for protecting electric cables.

Conforming Sign: A sign that is legally installed in accordance with federal, state, local laws and ordinances.

Conspicuity: The characteristics of the sign that enable an observer to differentiate the sign from its surrounding environment.

Content Neutral: Time, Place and Manner Regulations: Consistently applicable non-discriminatory sign regulations that specify, without reference to the content of the message, when, how and where a sign can be displayed, with physical standards, such as but not limited to height,

Contrast: The difference or degree of difference between things having similar or comparable natures, such as light and dark areas, colors, or typefaces.

Copy Area: Areas that enclose the actual copy on a sign.

Corrugated Board: A board created by gluing a corrugated piece to a flat face, or between two flat faces.

Coverage: The area (usually given in square feet) that a given material will coat-out.

Craze: Thin cracks or breaks in paint, plastic or vinyl, caused mainly by weathering, though it may also be caused by the incompatibility of paint layers or solvents.

Curing: The process of effecting a chemical change in some inks or paints by the application of heat or ultraviolet light.

Current: The flux or rate of flow of electrical charge carriers in a conductor. A unit of current is typically given in amperes or milliamperes (mA).

Custom Sign: A sign designed, manufactured and installed to meet the requirements of a specific location.

D

Decal: Copy and/or graphic printed on the non-adhesive side of film, then cut to a specified shape.

Deck Cabinet: Similar in detail and use as a raceway, except larger in cross section to provide a background area.

Delamination: The separation of layers in a laminated substrate. Delamination is most often caused when edges are overexposed to moisture, temperature extremes or UV light, resulting in adhesive failure.

Density: In sign making, a measurement used to express the hardness of foam boards in pounds per cubic-foot.

Die-Cut: A cut made with a steel rule die manufactured to cut a particular shape, commonly, when a large number for shapes with curved lines are to be cut. Also refers to the object that has been cut.

Diffusion Pump: A vacuum pump consisting of a boiler, a jet assembly and a cooling chamber, designed to increase the speed of evacuation of a neon tube after bombarding.

Dimensional Letter: A specification description of a letter, logo or symbol, cut-out, cast, molded or fabricated in material such as metal or plastic to create a raised condition.

Direct Current (DC): One of three varieties of electricity. Specifically, a current that always flows in one direction, around and around, as in the electricity that powers household batteries.

Directional Sign: Signs designed to provide direction to pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Directory Sign: A sign that identifies the names and locations of tenants in a multi-tenant building or in a development made up of a group of buildings.

Diver: Power supply for LED systems, providing low voltage output.

Dot Gain: Occurrence of dots printing larger than intended. The result may be bigger prints or darker colors, but also may create larger color blocks and more defined images.

Dots-Per-Inch (DPI): A unit of measure used to describe the resolution capability of a given piece of equipment by measuring the number of individual dots the device can reproduce in a linear inch. If the horizontal and vertical resolutions are different, typically both figures will be given. The high the number of dots, the less easy it is to distinguish individual dots, making image sharper.

Double Back: A 180-degree bend used in neon tubes to produce such letters as R, E, and G. Often used to describe the technique and placement of the electrode on a neon unit.

Double-Faced Sign: A sign with two parallel opposing (back-to-back) faces.

Double Tube: Two neon tubes running parallel to each other, often used for outlining or borders.

E

Eco-Solvent Inks: Inks using a less-toxic solvent-based carrier. Printers using eco-solvent inks emit less harmful VOCs (Volatile Organic Compounds)

Eaveline: The bottom of the roof eave or parapet

Electric Sign: Any sign containing or using electrical wiring.

Electrode: A terminal that conducts an electrical current between two conducting substances. Electrodes are found at both ends of a neon unit.

Electronic Message Center (EMC): A variable message sign that utilizes computer-generated messages or some other electronic means of changing copy. These signs include displays using incandescent lamps, LEDs, LCDs or PDPs.

Electrostatic Film: Vinyl film treated with a small charge of electricity, enabling it to temporarily, but firmly, adhere to glass and similar smooth substrates.

Emboss: The process of producing raised letters, particularly those produced by engraving dies or plates.

Engraving: Method of marking, negative relief utilizing a bit or graver. Engraving may be done freehand, using a pantograph or computer-driven equipment.

Exterior Illuminated Sign: A sign that is illuminated by a light source that is directed toward and shines on the face of a sign. Also called direct illumination.

Estimate: A price stating what a job is likely to cost: not considered binding. Estimates are provided when specifications are not firm.

Extrusion: A part created by forcing a raw material (usually metal or plastic) through a die to create a specific shape.

F

Face: The surface area on a sign where advertising copy is displayed.

Fascia Sign: A building mounted sign.

Finishing: Post-press operations required completing the printed piece such as trimming, folding and binding.

Flag Test: A target raised in order to justify the height and/or size of a sign.

Flasher: A mechanical device designed to interrupt the electrical current in a sign at regular interval, turning the light source on and off to create a flashing image.

Flat Cut-out Letter: A dimensional letter cut from sheet or plate stock.

Flexible Metallic Tubing: A flexible conduit tube used to protect electric wiring.

Flood: To print the entire surface of the sheet with ink or a coating.

Fluorescent Lamp or Tube: Electric-discharge lighting utilizing glass tubing manufactured to standard lengths.

Foam Board: A type of lightweight, rigid board used for interior signs. Foam boards consist of a foam center sheet laminated on one or both sides by a variety of substrates.

Font: A set of letters, numerals, and shapes, which conform to a specific set of design criteria.

Footing: The (usually) concrete supporting base of a structure, as for a pylon or monument sign. Also called “footer.”

Foamed: Refers to a plastic face or letter that has been heated and shaped to give it dimension.

Freestanding Sign: A sign that is supported by 1 or more uprights, braces, poles, or other similar structural components that is not attached to a building or buildings.

Freeway Sign (Off-Site): A sign adjacent to a freeway right-of-way that advertises a freeway adjacent business or a qualifying business in close proximity to a freeway.

Freeway Sign (On-Site): A sign adjacent to a freeway right-of-way which advertising the primary business or business located on that site.

Friction Feed: Process where material is fed through a printer or plotter by placing it between a motor-driven grit wheel and two tensioned pinch rollers.

Front Lighted Letter: An illuminated channel letter with translucent face.

G

Galvanized: Steel or iron that has been protected by a zinc coating.

Gauge: A method for measuring the thickness of sheet metal in the sign industry, most sheet metal ranges from 10-26 gauge.

Gilding: The application of thin metal sheets (see gold leaf) to glass and other surfaces.

Gold Leaf: Gold manufactured into thin leaves, commonly available in range of 10-12 karats.

Grand Opening: A promotional activity not exceeding 30 calendar days used by newly established businesses, within 2 months after occupancy, to inform the public of their location and service available to the community. “Grand Openings” does not mean an annual or occasional promotion of retail sales by a business.

Grommet: A reinforced metal eyelet found in banners used to receive cords or other fasteners.

GTO: A type of insulated wire capable of handling high voltages on the secondary circuit of a neon sign.

H

HDPE: (High-Density Polyethylene): A strong, relatively opaque form of polyethylene having a dense structure.

HDU (High-Density Urethane): A type of hard foam product used in sign production. Urethane has the density and fabrication characteristics of wood, but only one-third of the weight.

Heat Bending: The process of heating PVC boards and then bending them to desired shapes.

Height of Sign: The greatest vertical distance measured from the existing grade at the mid-point of the sign support(s) that intersect the ground to the highest element of the sign.

Hexachrome: Color matching system created by Pantone inc. for combining six colors to create a larger gamut of reproducible color.

Hinging: Vinyl installation process where a cut vinyl image, the carrier liner and the transfer tape are placed on the target surface; a piece of masking take is then attached to the top edge of the transfer tape. The liner is then slowly rolled off from the top edge, and the transfer take and vinyl image are slowly smoothed onto the surface.

Holiday Decoration Sign: Temporary signs, in the nature of decorations, clearly incidental to and customarily associated with holidays.

Housing: For neon tubing, made from porcelain or Pyrex glass, a housing mounted in the sign that provides the contact between the electrode and the lead-in wire.

I

Identification Sign: A sign providing the name, type of business, or the name and logo in combination identifying a particular business establishment.

Illegal Sign: Any of the following:

- A sign erected without first complying with all ordinances and regulations in effect at the time of its construction and erection or use.
- A sign that is a danger to the public or is unsafe.
- A sign that is a traffic hazard not created by relocation of streets or highways or by acts of the city or county (a sign that is a public nuisance).

Illuminated Sign: A sign with a light source for the purpose of lighting the sign.

Informational Sign: A sign identifying the type of product of service provided by a business.

Inkjet Printer: Device that drops liquid ink onto a substrate for printing. The thermal bubble type of inkjet heats ink to approximately 400 degrees F inside a small chamber before shooting it through a series of nozzles. A piezo-based inkjet puts ink in a small chamber and then sends a charge to contract piezoelectric crystal lining the chamber and send the ink through the nozzles.

Ink-Receptive: A sign that is lighted through the use of internal electric fixtures or lampbanks. See “backlit sign” and “exterior illumination.”

Institutional Sign: A sign identifying the premises of a church, school, hospital, rest home, or similar institutional facility.

Interior Signs: Signs that are located inside a building or other facility not meant to be viewed primarily from a public right of way.

Internally Illuminated Sign: A sign that is illuminated by a light source that is contained inside the sign.

K

Kiosk: An off-premise sign used for directing people to the sales office or models of a residential subdivision project.

Knife Bevel: Angle of the vertical cutting edge of a plotter blade. Bevels can be between 30 degrees for general vinyl, and 60 degrees for sandblast mask.

L

Laser: An acronym for Light Amplification by Stimulated Emission of Radiation.

Legal Non-Conforming Sign: A legally established sign that fails to conform to the current regulations of this chapter.

Legibility: The characteristics of letters, numbers, graphics, or symbols that make it possible to differentiate one from the other. See Conspicuity.

Lacquer: A quick-drying clear finishing material similar to varnish. May also be used as a binder.

Laminate: A process by which different materials are layered and then bonded together using adhesion. The end result may be the creation of a substrate such as medium-density overlay (MDO) or the protection of the underlying surface, as when a clear, plastic film is laminated to a decorated surface.

LED (Light-Emitting Diode): A semiconductor diode that emits light when voltage is applied; a solid state lighting component, used in signage for EMCs, channel letters illumination, edge lighting glass or acrylic panels or for various decorative lighting effects. Lead-in wire - The wire that connects an electrode to the power source.

Listed Sign: A sign labeled to indicate that the manufacturer of the sign is identified in a list published by a National Recognized Testing Laboratory as producing signs in conformance with the applicable American National Standard.

Local Shipping Center: A shopping center with a gross site area of fewer than 20 acres.

Logo: An established identifying symbol or mark associated with a business or business entity.

Logo Sign: An established trademark or symbol identifying the use of a building.

Luminous Tube: A unit of measurement for light; Also, a neon or fluorescent tube, consisting of a sealed glass vacuum tube with an electrode at each end containing a specific gas. As an electrical current is passed between the electrodes, the gas is ionized and emits light.

M

Magnetic Sheeting: Magnetic strip laminated to a flexible plastic sheet and sold in rolls.

Mahl Stick: A baton-like piece of wood with a knob at one end to provide extra support for a painter's brush hand.

Major Tenant: A shopping center's key tenants(s), which serves to attract customers to the center through its size, product line, name and/or reputation as determined by the center property owner/authorized property management. The term "anchor tenant" is interchangeable with the term major tenant.

Manifold: In neon tube processing, a system of vacuum tight tubing arranged so that attached tubes can be evacuated with a vacuum system and filled with rare gases.

Masking: In painting or screen printing, the process of covering usually with tape or paper – areas to protect them from receiving subsequent layers of paint or ink.

Mansard: A decorative fascia used to hide equipment or articles on the roof or to enhance the storefront appearance.

Marquee: A permanent canopy often of metal and glass projecting over an entrance.

Marquee Sign: 1) A sign mounted on a permanent canopy, 2) A traditional industry term for the variable message section of a canopy sign, 3) An integral sign and permanent canopy.

Medium-Density Overlay (MDO): An exterior-grade plywood with an average veneer on both sides.

Menu Board: A variable message sign that allows a retailer to list products and prices.

Mercury: A heavy, silver white metallic element liquid a room temperature. In neon tube processing, it may be mixed with rare gases, typically argon, to produce ultraviolet light.

Message Area: The area within the sign panel describing the limits of the message.

Message Center: An electronically or mechanically variable message sign enabling changes to be made from locations other than at the sign. (See also variable message sign.)

Mobile Sign: A portable sign mounted on a trailer.

Monument Sign: A ground sign with low overall height with the appearance of having a solid base. (See freestanding sign.)

N

National Electric Code (NEC): Electrical safety code adopted by many jurisdictions around the United States, published by the National Fire Protection Association.

Neon: A rare inert gas that, when an electric current is discharged through it, produces a reddish-orange glow. The word “neon” is also often used synonymously to describe a type of luminous tube sign, which may contain other inert gases such as argon.

Neon Sign: A sign manufactured utilizing neon tubing, which is visible to the viewer.

NEC: National Electric Code

Nesting: Placement of images or jobs in an arrangement to minimize waste of material when cutting.

Non-Conforming Sign: An illegal sign (see Illegal Sign)

O

Off-Premise Sign: Any sign that advertises or informs in any manner businesses, services, or events at some location other than that upon which the sign is located. This does not include billboard or outdoor advertising structure.

On-Premise Sign: A communication device whose message and design relates to a business, an event, goods, profession or service being conducted, sold or offered on the same property as there the sign is erected.

Opacity: Measurement of resistance to light passing through a particular substrate.

Opaque: Not clear or translucent; not allowing light to show through.

Open Channel Letter: A dimensional letter that has no face and, if illuminated with the light source, visible. A clear face for physical protection of internal components may be used.

Outgas: The characteristic of a solid or liquid to vaporize under heat. Occurs in some plastics and paints if they are not through drying, resulting in adhesive failure to anything applied over them. Also describes the release of impurities in vacuum systems such as neon tubes during processing.

P

Painted Wall Sign: See Building Mounted Sign.

Parapet: Is a wall-like barrier at the edge of a roof or structure.

Pan Channel Letter: A dimensional letter that is constructed with sidewalls, back and a face making the letter a solid integral unit with the sidewalls and back, having a pan shaped cross section.

Pan Face: A plastic sign face molded into a three-dimensional shape. Also called “molded face,” “molded and embossed face,” and “molded and debossed face.”

Pantone Matching System (PMS): Standardized series of thousands of colors, each with specific color formulations and identification number.

Permanent Flags: Any canvas, vinyl-coated fabric, acrilan, or similar material used for decorative or architectural enhancement with no commercial advertising of products or services. Permanent flags are related to a cultural or civic event or goal of the City.

Permanent Sign: A sign attached to a building, structure, or the ground in manner that enables the sign to resist environmental loads, such as wind, and precludes ready removal or movement of the sign.

Perforating Wheel: A toothed wheel on a handle that allows it to rotate freely, used to trace line art, creating perforations for pattern making. Also called a “pounce wheel.” See Pounce Pattern.

Phosphors: Chemical powders used to coat fluorescent tubes. A range of phosphors is available to produce a large variety of colors and whites.

Piezo Inkjet: A printing process that uses the oscillations of electrically stimulated piezo electric crystals to force ink through inkjet nozzles.

Pigment: A compound used to color other materials, such as paints and inks. Pigments are insoluble, finely ground particles and may be organic or inorganic.

Pixelization: Process where the number of pixels are simply multiplied to increase resolution. The result is a higher dpi but the altering of detail from smooth to square-step lines, or “jaggies.”

Plotter: Device that interprets information sent from a computer and moves a tool head to a series of coordinates based on the devices X and Y axes. Sign markers use a plotter equipped with a knife to cut vinyl with the X and Y coordinates, forming an outline that can be weeded and installed on a surface.

PMS: Acronym for Pantone Matching System, an ink formulation guide used by printers.

Point-of-Purchase Advertising (P.O.P): In-store advertising designed to sell more and different products to shoppers once they are in the store. The term applies to a store’s internal sign system, as well as special displays. Also known as “point-of-sale advertising.”

Pole or Pylon Cover: An enclosure for concealing and/or for decorating poles or other structural support of a ground sign.

Pole Sign: A freestanding sign with visible support structure.

Political Signs: A temporary sign directly associated with national, state, or local elections.

Polycarbonate: A type of plastic used in sign faces, noted for its heat-resistance and impact strength.

Polymer: Stable chemical compound or mixture of compounds consisting essentially of repeated structural units. UV curing inks, once cured, become a solid polymer.

Polypropylene: A type of plastic used in banners, noted for its flexibility at low temperatures and its resistance to chemicals.

Polyurethane: Any of various synthetic polymers used in elastic fibers, molded products, coatings, etc.

Portable Sign: A sign that is not permanently affixed to a structure or the ground.

Pounce Pattern: A full-sized pattern of any design to be painted. Once the pattern is created, the outline is perforated using a manual or electric tool, the pattern is then held firmly against the substrate and the perforations patted with powder, leaving an outline of the design.

Pressure-Sensitive: An adhesive that reacts when pressure is applied to the surfaces it is between. Sometimes used to refer to vinyl with a pressure-sensitive adhesive.

Primary Sign: The largest sign located on the building front wall containing the main entrance.

Primary Wall: The wall on a non-residential structure that contains the primary entrance to the business.

Primary Wiring: Electrical wiring that directly connects a device, such as a neon transformer to the breaker box.

Prime: To coat a raw substrate prior to the application of paint or adhesive. A primer coat prevents subsequent coats of paint or adhesive from being absorbed.

Process Color: The three primary colors of printing – cyan (blue); magenta (red); and yellow; plus black. When printed as halftones in that order, they create a full range of natural colors. Their printing is also known as four-color process, or CMYK.

Public Nuisance: A sign, sign structure or advertising structure that is one or more of the following:

- A public nuisance.
- An abandoned sign.
- An illegal sign.

Pumping System: In neon tube production, the pumping system is used to remove impurities from the tubes and fill them with rare gases. A pumping system typically consists of a manifold, vacuum pumps, rare gases, a bombarder and electrical controllers.

Push-Through: A letter or logo cut out of a backing material that is as thick or thicker than the sign face material, and mounted on the inside of the sign face so that the backing material's thickness extends flush with or through and beyond the front pane of the sign face.

PVC: Polyvinyl chloride, the most common plastic in use in the world. PVC is extruded or cast as sheets, tubing or films. PVC films are also commonly referred to as "vinyl."

Q

Quotation: Price offered to produce the job; considered to be binding provided specifications don't change.

R

Raceway: An electrical enclosure that may also serve as a mounting structure for the sign.

Raster Image: An image created by a collection of pixels arranged in a rectangular way.

Rasterization: The process of translating data into a bitmap pattern for output by a digital printing device.

Real Estate Sign: An on-site sign pertaining to the sale or lease of the premises.

Recognition: Refers to the ability of a viewer to identify the message.

Reflective Sheeting: Film with very small glass or glass-like materials encapsulated below its surface, creating the ability to bounce light beams back to its source.

Resin Transfer: Method of heating a color on a carrier sheet (called a ribbon or foil) and printing in onto a substrate. The plastic-based resin is fused onto a material such as vinyl, creating a more-permanent image with waterfastness and UV protection.

Resolution: In digital imaging and printing, the number of pixels (or dots) of information per horizontal inch of actual image; the higher number, as measured pixels horizontally and vertically, the more precise the pictured image. In plotting, the degree of accuracy

that a plotter will place a knife-head in relation to a theoretical, perfect location of a coordinate.

Retainer: A framing member mounted around the perimeter of a sign face, and attached to the sign cabinet structure. It is designed to attach the face to the cabinet and/or intended to provide a decorating trim piece.

Retarder: An additive that slows the drying time of ink or paint.

Return: The sides of a channel letter.

Reveal: An indented detail on a sign.

Reverse Channel Letter: A fabricated dimensional letter with opaque face and sidewalls.

RIP (Raster Image Processor): Software used to create and place dots (or bitmaps) for printing, and then transferring that information to a printer.

Roof Sign: A sign erected, constructed, or placed upon or over a roof of a building, including a mansard roof, and which is wholly or partly supported by such buildings.

Routing: Elimination of material in a substrate, using a tool bit machined to remove material.

S

Sandblasting: A pressurized stream of sand or synthetic particles used to remove material from a substrate, such as glass, wood or HDU. A rubberized stencil of the artwork is either hand- or computer-cut or applied to the substrate, which is then sandblasted.

Saturation: The measurement of white, with zero percent representing pure color.

Ground-Fault Protection: A ground fault detection system built into neon transformers based on the UL2161 standard that detects current flow to ground and, if it reaches a preset level (15 mA or greater), turns off the transformer.

Secondary Sign: A sign identifying a business located within the tenant space of the primary business.

Sidewalk/Sandwich Sign: A moveable sign not secured or attached to the ground of surface upon which it is located, but supported by its own frame and most often forming the cross-sectional shape of an A.

Sign: Any visual display with words or symbols designed to convey information or attract attention.

Sign Band: A horizontal area above a multi-tenant's building's entrance, architecturally designed to accommodate signage in a sign centric manner.

Sign Face: The area of a sign on which copy is intended to be placed.

Signcentric Design: Building architectural design, which makes the signage the prominent visual feature.

Sign Program: A coordinated program of one or more signs for an individual building or building complexes with multiple tenants.

Single Face Sign: A sign with only one face plane.

Sizing: The substance applied to the substrate before gilding in order to make the gold leaf adhere to the surface.

Solvent: A petroleum-based liquid used to modify oil-based paints and inks and to remove them from frames and brushes.

Solvent Inks: Inks that use solvent as a carrier. Commonly used for printing onto vinyl, and offering good outdoor durability. Printers using solvent-based inks emit VOCs and should be ventilated.

Spectrophotometer: Measuring device that takes the colorimetric and special values of samples from a printed piece or device and compares them to standard colors.

Spot Colors: Color used for a specific need within a print. It may be a separate, special tone to match a corporate color, or it may result from the overlapping of colors within a halftone.

Sprocket Feed: Process where material is fed through a plotter by aligning pre-punched holes along the medium edges with raised points along the ends of the plotter's motor-driven drum wheel. Also called "tractor feed" or "pin feed."

Squeegee: A hard plastic or nylon blade used to apply pressure to increase surface adhesion between cut vinyl and the transfer tape or between the vinyl and sign face.

Stencil: A thin sheet of material into which a design is cut.

Stopscock: A valve for controlling or stopping the movement of a liquid or gas.

Street Furniture: Advertising displays, many which provide a public amenity, positioned at close proximity to pedestrians for eye-level viewing or at a curbside to reach vehicular traffic. An example is a bench sign.

Substrate: The material out of which a sign face is made. Wood, metal sheeting, paper and acrylic are all sign substrates.

Supports: Insulators that support a neon tube, as well as hold it away from the background surface and provide some impact resistance. Also known as “stand-offs.”

T

Tack: The stickiness of an adhesive under a given condition. Some adhesives require a particular temperature range for maximum tack.

Temporary Sign: A sign intended to be displayed for a limited period of time.

Time and Temperature Display: A variable message sign, which displays current time and temperature in a stationary or alternating manner. Some also display simple messages.

Thermal-Transfer Printer: Device that uses a heating element head to transfer resin- or wax-based colors from a carrier sheet (a ribbon or foil) to a medium.

Thermoforming: Taking a flat sheet of material and giving it dimension by heating and then forcing it into a mold either mechanically or pneumatically. Also known as “pan-forming.”

Thinner: Any liquid used to reduce the thickness of paint or ink.

Throughput: Actual speed of a plotter in completing a job. Difficult to measure, but it represents a plotter’s ability to process information and then cut an image.

Thumbnail: A type of rough sketch before preparing a complete design.

Trademark: A word or name that, with a distinctive type or letter style, is associated with a business or business entity in the conduct of business.

Total Cost of Ownership: The accumulated costs, both fixed and variable, of owning a copier. Includes the amortized purchase price, supplies, materials and disposable parts.

Toner: A fine, negatively charged, plastic-based powder.

Traffic Count: The estimated number of people who will see a sign in a given time period.

Transfer Tape: Medium-tack adhesive-coated translucent paper, placed on weeded vinyl images still on the original carrier liner; the tack of the tape is stronger than the adhesion of the vinyl to the coated liner, so the image is pulled off the liner in a transfer to another surface.

Translucent: The property of a substrate, vinyl, paint or ink to allow the passage of some light through it without being transparent.

U

UL: An Abbreviation for Underwriters Laboratories, Inc., and a Nationally Recognized Testing Laboratory.

Under-Canopy Sign: A sign designed to be mounted underneath a canopy.

UV-Curing: Printing process in which a lamp emitting ultraviolet (UV) rays is used to transform monomer-based liquid inks (deposited onto a substrate) into polymer-based solid inks. Commonly used process in many digital flatbed printers.

V

Vacuum Forming: Taking a flat sheet of plastic material and giving it dimension by placing it in a mold, heating it until it's flexible and then withdrawing the air in the mold, creating a vacuum. See thermoforming.

Vacuum Gauge: Measures the degree of vacuum in a neon manifold by measuring residual gas pressure.

Variable Message Sign: A sign that includes provisions for message changes. Also called "changeable copy panel," "changeable copy sign," "time and temperature sign," "electronic message center."

Vectorization: Function of tracing around a bitmap image to create an outline comprised of line segments, or vectors; also called "auto tracing."

Vehicle Dealership: One or more vehicle sales establishments (with ancillary used cars and recreational vehicle sales).

Vehicle Sign: A sign that is attached to or painted on a vehicle that is parked on or adjacent to any property, the principal purpose of which is to attract attention to a product sold or an activity or business located on such property.

Viscosity: The thickness of a paint or ink.

Visibility: The quality of a letter, number, graphic, or symbol, which enables the observer to distinguish it from its surrounds of background.

VOCs: Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) are petroleum-based chemical compounds with high vapor pressure and low water solubility (evaporate easily). Commonly found in industrial solvents, including those used as carriers in solvent-based inks. VOCs are considered toxic and airborne VOCs are federally regulated in some industries.

W

Wayfinding: Enabling a person to find his or her way to a given destination through the use of effective signage.

Wall Mount: A single face sign mounted on a wall. Another name for a wall sign.

Weed: Process of peeling extraneous vinyl (or matrix) away from a plotter cut, leaving only the sections representing the final image. Pulling the extra vinyl away in one quick stroke is known as “rip weeding.”

Window Sign: Any sign that is applied or attached to a window or located in such a manner that it can be seen from the exterior of the structure.

X

X axis: Theoretical horizontal line providing a lengthwise reference point for plotters and routers.

Y

Y axis: Theoretical vertical line providing a longitudinal reference point for plotters and routers.

Z

Z axis: Theoretical line providing a depth reference point for routers.