Color Coding

While color is one of the most effective on-the-job safety devices used, it should always be employed in combination with clearly printed labels. All workers should be familiar with the color plan and color coding used by their companies. If hazards are identified by a good, consistent color system, and proper orientation and familiarization procedures are followed to acquaint all workers with the color-hazard relationship, the recommended color-code system does not necessarily have to be followed.

The standard color-code system to identify related hazards is:

**Red** – for fire apparatus and equipment, safety containers for flammable materials, and emergency devices like switches for emergency stopping of machinery, stop bars, and buttons.

**Orange** – for potentially dangerous parts of machinery or equipment that may cut, crush, shock or otherwise injure a person.

**Yellow** – the color of caution; for physical dangers, such as slipping, tripping, falling, caught-between and striking-against hazards.

**Green** – the color of safety; for first-aid equipment locations.

**Blue** – a caution color; for warning against the use or movement of equipment being repaired or worked on, or the starting of equipment.

**Purple** – the basic color for warning of radiation hazards.

**Black, white** or a combination – for designating and helping to control traffic movement, and for aisle markings, housekeeping areas and similar areas.

Signs, tags and tickets should follow the same basic colors. Color coding is used extensively in certain piping systems to indicate to workers what the line contains, such as water, steam, electricity, high pressure, air, gases or chemicals. Color coding is also used on industrial gas cylinders, but be advised that different chemicals may use the same color cylinders – chlorine, ammonia, and oxygen are all coded green, for example.

All of you should become thoroughly familiar with the color coding used in your work areas. In addition, it’s important that new employees or veteran employees with a new job be acquainted with the system of color coding.