

Australasian College
for Emergency Medicine

Emergency department signage

Policy P20

Document review

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Revision history

Version	Date	Revisions
V1	Mar-1999	First version
V2	Jul-2006	Revised document
V3	Mar-2013	Revised document
V4	Jul-2019	Content revised and new template adopted
V5	Mar-2023	Culturally safe signage added

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1. Purpose and scope

This document outlines the policy position of the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) on signage that should be used to denote emergency departments (EDs). It is a matter of public safety that if a facility is signposted as an 'Emergency Department' or 'Emergency' that the facility must comply with a minimum standard.

2. Policy

Emergency care is provided by a wide range of facilities and providers from remote clinics, general practices, ambulance services, retrieval services through to EDs. EDs are dedicated, hospital-based facilities specifically designed and staffed to provide 24-hour emergency care. An ED cannot operate in isolation and must be part of an integrated health delivery system within a hospital, both operationally and structurally (refer to ACEM [Policy on Standard Terminology \(P02\)](#) and [Statement on the Delineation of Emergency Departments \(S12\)](#)).

'Emergency' and 'Emergency Department' signage should only be used at facilities that comply with the minimum standards as defined in [Statement on the Delineation of Emergency Departments \(S12\)](#).

The terms 'casualty', 'accident', 'accident and emergency' or 'accident and medical' are confusing to the public and should not be used by health care facilities. Such terms are misleading and health care facilities that display them may be mistaken as EDs.

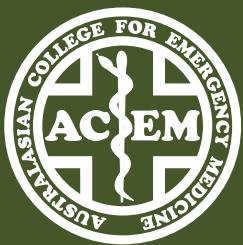
3. Procedure and actions

ED signage should consist of the word 'Emergency' or 'Emergency Department' in white letters on a red background, complying with [Australian Standards: safety signs for the occupational environment \(AS1319\)](#). ACEM acknowledges that the symbols of the International Red Cross and the Swiss flag are protected symbols under Article 38 of the Geneva Convention.

Hospitals without an ED should have signage clearly indicating this. The signage should include details of the nearest available EDs.

Specialised EDs, such as paediatric or eye and ear hospital EDs, should have their area of specialisation clearly displayed.

ED signage that has Indigenous art embedded, or is in the local language, can improve Indigenous peoples' experiences of the ED. Working with local Indigenous communities is key to improvement of use and outcomes.



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