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## WaterReuse California Recycled Water Signage Guidelines

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## How to Use These Guidelines

This WaterReuse California Signage Guidelines (guidelines) document seeks to supply California recycled water users with guidance on creating signage for their properties with the goal of producing a more uniform informational message to the public.

The guidelines have suggestions for sign composition, color, font, size, and message. The guidelines also offer translations of frequently used messages on recycled water signs.

The document can be used to gather ideas for creative approaches to recycled water signs, or it can be used as a reference of sign options to consider using.

The guidelines were prepared by the WaterReuse California Communications Collaborative Group—a group that provides a forum to discuss and collaborate about recycled water communications. The guidelines are hosted on the WaterReuse website here:

<https://watereuse.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/WaterReuse-California-Signage-Guidelines-2021.pdf>

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For decades, utilities and recycled water customers have been complying with local regulatory requirements to inform the public about the use of recycled water on their properties using posted signs. Currently, the California State Water Resources Control Board's Title 22 Code of Regulations, Article 4 section (g) states that:

All use areas where recycled water is used that are accessible to the public shall be posted with signs that are visible to the public, in a size no less than 4 inches high by 8 inches wide, that include the following wording: "RECYCLED WATER - DO NOT DRINK".

Each sign shall display an international symbol similar to that shown in figure 60310-A (a cup with a line crossing through it diagonally). The Department may accept alternative signage and wording, or an educational program, provided the applicant demonstrates to the Department that the alternative approach will assure an equivalent degree of public notification.

Over the years, the stipulations outlined in the code have resulted in a myriad of signs. The message, colors, fonts, and icons change from sign to sign, resulting in a lack of uniformity across the industry in California. For example, while many of the signs use a purple color to denote the use of tertiary treated recycled water, the purple hue of each sign can be different, and others do not include the color at all. Similarly, the message can vary beyond the mandatory clause of 'Recycled Water – Do Not Drink.'



This guidelines document seeks to supply California recycled water users with recommendations on creating signage for their properties with the goal of producing a more uniform informational message to the public.

The most common type of recycled water signage in California is for irrigated landscapes that use recycled water. Signs are required on landscaping irrigated with recycled water to make clear to the public that this type of recycled water is not for consumption as drinking water.

An unintended consequence of this regulation is that people started to associate any mention of recycled water with a water-quality standard that was not fit for drinking. Now that Advanced Purified Water is being used for indirect potable reuse projects and direct potable reuse is on the horizon, it will be good practice to uncouple the term 'Recycled Water' from the message 'Do Not Drink.'

For this reason, it is advised that recycled water users who need to inform the public about the use of recycled water use softer and more descriptive language. An example would be "Irrigated with Recycled Water. Not for Drinking." In this example, the public is informed that the recycled water used for irrigation onsite is not for drinking, but the directive is much less harsh.

Currently, water agencies interested in pursuing softer language must do so by applying for written approval of alternative wording with the California State Water Resources Control Board, and other local authorities as required. WateReuse California is currently working with the California legislature to revise the language of the Title 22 water recycling code and the revised signage language is proposed to be included in that revision. If approved, this alternative wording can be used without the need to seek special State Water Resources Control Board approval.

## What Kind Of Sign Do You Need?

These guidelines were created to offer different avenues of support for recycled water agencies or customers who need to create informational signage about their use of recycled water.

For agencies that are looking to save time while supporting industry uniformity, there is a print-ready sign option that you can use by downloading the file. For agencies that would like to add their logo or other creative elements, a sign template is provided with placeholders for additional content (see Sign Templates, pg. 3).

Lastly, for agencies seeking to design their own signs, there are guidelines for each design element including content, translations, size, color, and font.

Below are design templates using the font, size, color, logo and language recommendations included in these guidelines. The first template is a print-ready design that can be used as is. The second template provides open space that could be used for additional translated text, additional explanatory language or a graphic.

Print Ready Template  
Size Shown: 8" x 4"  
*Not to scale*

[Download sign here](#)



Editable Template  
Size Shown: 11" x 9"  
*Not to scale*

[Download sign here](#)



As seen from the examples of existing signs (see Sign Examples, pg. 11), agencies are making different design choices when creating their signs. Sign content can range from informational to educational, or even promotional. It's important to consider what the objectives are for the sign and understand the tradeoffs that may exist between different objectives.

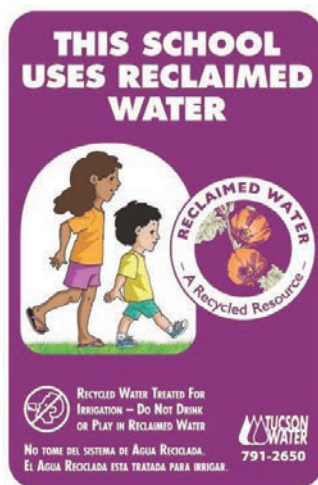
For example, if the priority is to simply meet the standards while softening the 'DO NOT DRINK' language, then signs can be small in size, omit any extra images or icons, and use proportionally large font size throughout.

However, for more educational signs, there will likely be added text to give more context to the agency's use of recycled water. The benefit is that the reader will better understand what the recycled water is being used for and this builds water literacy. The tradeoff is that smaller font sizes may be needed to accommodate more text. To support the added text, icons or simple images can be used to help readers process the message quickly.

Images that depict natural elements or sustainability can help to create an association of recycled water with positive, natural qualities rather than association with danger or something that may sicken people.



*Bold simple text*



*Icons and infographics*



*Descriptive text*



As introduced in Design Considerations, sign content can range from informational to educational. See some options for each below.

#### Text Alternatives for Informational Signs

- Recycled water, not for drinking
- Recycled water in use, not for drinking



#### Text Alternatives for Educational Signs

- Irrigated with recycled water
- Water recycled for irrigation
- To conserve groundwater, this property is irrigated with recycled water
- We're using water wisely by irrigating with recycled water
- This fixture flushes with recycled water
- To conserve drinking water, this fixture flushes with recycled water



Translation	Meaning	Language
不適合飲用	"Not for drinking" or "not suitable for drinking"	Chinese
No es para beber	"Not for drinking"	Spanish
Se Usa Agua Reciclada	"Recycled water in use"	Spanish
Regado con agua reciclada	"Irrigated with recycled water"	Spanish
Agua reciclada para riego	Water recycled for irrigation	Spanish
Esta propiedad se riega con agua reciclada para conservar el agua subterránea	To conserve groundwater, this property is irrigated with recycled water	Spanish
Usamos agua con sabiduría cuando regamos con agua reciclada.	We're using water wisely by irrigating with recycled water	Spanish
Este inodoro se vacía con agua reciclada	This toilet flushes with recycled water	Spanish
Para conservar el agua potable, este accesorio se vacía con agua reciclada	To conserve drinking water, this fixture flushes with recycled water	Spanish



The standard purple color for all recycled water marking is called Irvine Purple, having been originated for recycled water designation by Irvine Ranch Water District in 1985. This color is now the standard for recycled water signs and fixtures, and should be used wherever possible to create a consistent look for recycled water across California. Also shown are two variants that could be used if Irvine Purple does not work for your design.



**Pantone 512**  
***Irvine Ranch Water District***

RGB 133,50,117  
CMYK: 53,94,23,6  
Hex #853275

Additional Color Options



**Pantone 522**  
RGB 187,155,197  
CMYK: 26,41,2,0  
Hex #BB9BC5



**Pantone 511**  
RGB 98,45,80  
CMYK: 57,88,42,33  
Hex #622D50

The following bolder, non-serif fonts are recommended so that the text stands out and is easier to read from a distance. These fonts are common or can be easily downloaded online.

[Download fonts here](#)

# Not for Drinking

Font: Myriad Pro Bold  
Size: 80 pt

# Not for Drinking

Font: Myriad Pro Bold Condensed  
Size: 100 pt

# Not for Drinking

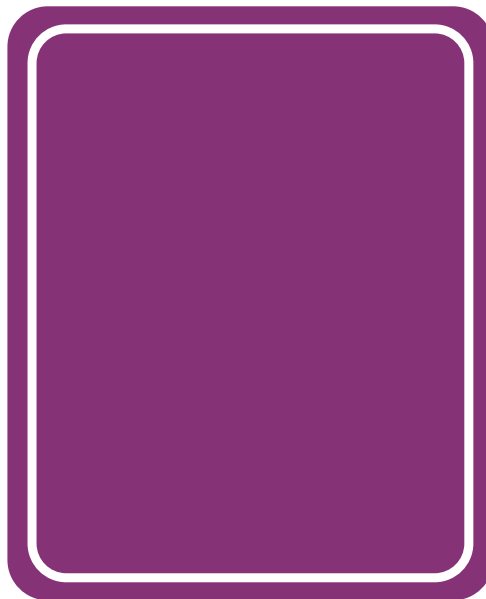
Font: Franklin Gothic Heavy  
Size: 80 pt

# Not for Drinking

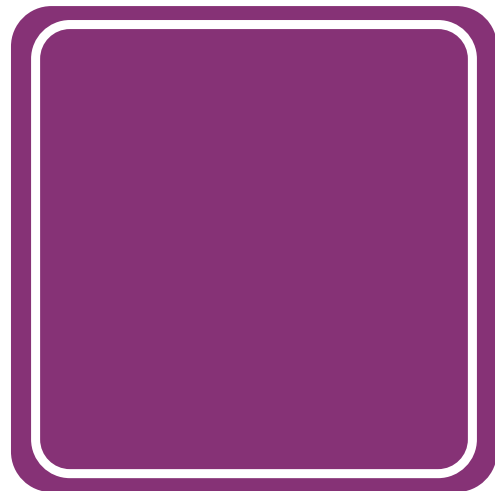
Font: Arial Bold  
Size: 80 pt

Signs should be designed to be large enough to easily view and read from the perspective of users. When describing recycled water use at a urinal or bathroom stall, a sign may be as small as 2 inches by 1.5 inches. Most irrigation signs should be 4 inches by 8 inches or larger. (Current requirements state that signs be visible to the public, in a size no less than 4 inches high by 8 inches wide.) Signs may be horizontal (landscape), vertical (portrait), or square. Many agencies use a horizontal orientation which allows uninterrupted lines of text, while others have determined that vertical or square signs allow for greater contact between the sign and sign post, making it sturdier.

Vertical  
Size: 9" x 11"



Horizontal  
Size: 11" x 9"

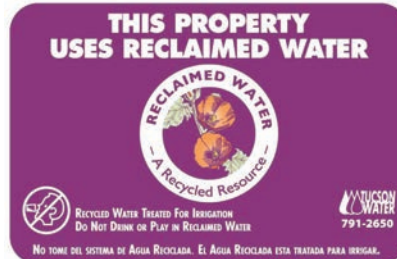


Square  
Size: 9" x 9"

[Download icon here](#)



Below is a sample of recycled water signs across California as of 2020, demonstrating the variety of language, sign sizes and designs.





[watereuse.org/sections/watereuse-california](http://watereuse.org/sections/watereuse-california)