

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation

2026 Agricultural Fair Facility Improvements

2026 Facility Improvements set by the Commissioner: Signage

Per Maine law, distribution of Stipend Funds to fair licensees must be divided into amounts in proportion to the sums expended for premiums to each licensee that has met the standards for facility improvements set by the commissioner for that licensee. A licensee that has not complied with the improvement standards set by the commissioner for a given year is not eligible for reimbursement under this subsection for that year. [7. M.R.S.A. §86. PL 2005, c. 563, §3]

The Commissioner has determined that the 2026 facility-improvement standards for all Maine agricultural fair licensees will focus on signage. Signage is important to safety and risk management. There are three signage categories that agricultural fair evaluators assess: “egress signage,” “inherent risk signage,” and “safety signage.” While multiple fairs received “very good” scores in one of these categories, few fairs received “very good” in all three signage categories.

While it is important for fairs to have sufficient signage to inform fairgoers and exhibitors of dangers, hazards, and safety instructions, this does not necessarily mean you need to install new signs in every space. It is requested that all fairs inspect their fairgrounds and identify where the highest likelihood of exposure to potential dangers, hazards, and inherent risks exists, and where emergency, fire, and safety instructions are needed, as well as handwashing locations. During the fair self-inspection, fairs should document where signs may need to be updated or installed, and plan to complete signage improvements before the start of their licensed fair. All fairs will be required to inform the Department of the signage improvements made in their 2026 Annual Stipend Report. Signage improvements do not need to create an undue expense for the fairs. In some cases, signage may be better positioned, refreshed, printed on a home or office printer or purchased inexpensively.

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2026 Agricultural Fair Facility Improvements

2026 Evaluation Standards: Signage

Fair signage is important to warn about hazards, set clear expectations, and encourage safety among fairgoers and exhibitors.

Egress Signage:

- Entrances and Exits are well-marked and identifiable to accommodate both exhibitors and fairgoers.
- Scoring: 1 (Poor), 2 (Adequate), 3 (Very Good)

Inherent Risk Signage:

- [Signs](#) remind fairgoers of the inherent risks of agritourism and [equine](#) (as applicable) activities.
- Scoring: 1 (Poor), 2 (Adequate), 3 (Very Good)

Safety Signage:

- Signage informs fairgoers of potential danger and/or hazards and informs of emergency, fire, and safety instructions, and handwashing locations.
- Scoring: 1 (Poor), 2 (Adequate), 3 (Very Good)

Signage: Materials and Wording

Sign Materials. All signs should have rounded or blunt corners and must be free from sharp edges, burrs, splinters, or other sharp projections. The ends or heads of bolts or other fastening devices must be located in such a way that they do not create a hazard.

Wording. Signs should describe the hazard and ways to avoid a hazard. A single symbol, picture, or word rarely does both. The wording of any sign should be easily read and concise. Sign wording should make a positive rather than a negative suggestion and be accurate in informing readers. Text should be readable at a minimum distance of five feet.

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation

2026 Agricultural Fair Facility Improvements

Signage: Types

- **Caution signs.** Caution signs warn of potential hazards and indicate that an injury may occur if the hazard is not avoided. The sign should be yellow or predominantly yellow and include “CAUTION.” Safety symbols must precede the signal words and lettering on the signs. Text should be black. **Examples:**
 - **"Caution: Heavy Machinery Operating"**: To warn visitors of tractors or equipment movement.
 - **"Caution: Manure Storage - Authorized Personnel Only"**: To prevent accidental falls or exposure.
- **Danger signs.** Danger signs indicate immediate danger and that special precautions are necessary. The sign must include “DANGER” in white letters on a red background. **Examples:**
 - **"Danger No Smoking"** signs should be placed in barns and hay and machinery storage areas where smoking poses an immediate extreme risk such as fire or explosion near flammable materials.
- **Emergency instruction signs.** provide instructions on an emergency process. (like first aid). They are often posters with a green upper panel with white lettering. Instructive text on the lower panel is in black lettering. **Examples:**
 - **"Emergency Assembly Point"**: Clearly marked locations for evacuation.
 - **"First Aid Station"**: Highly visible signs for medical assistance.
- **Exit signs.** show the direction to the nearest exit using an arrow. Do not use an arrow if the exit path continues straight on. Signs that show an arrow point in the direction of the exit in conjunction with a symbol of a person exiting should make sure the person and the arrow both exit in the same direction on the sign.
- **Fire and emergency signs.** point to fire extinguishing equipment, fire escapes and exits, gas shut-off valves, sprinkler drains and lifesaving equipment (like defibrillators). They have a signal word in white on a red background.

Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation

2026 Agricultural Fair Facility Improvements

- **Safety Instruction signs.** provide notices about health, first aid, medical equipment, sanitation, housekeeping and general safety. The color should be white with black letters or green with white letters. **Examples:**
 - Signs that instruct visitors not to eat, drink, smoke/vape, touch or place their hands in their mouth, touch their eyes, or use bottles or pacifiers while in animal areas.
 - **"Wash Hands Immediately After Touching Animals"**: Essential to prevent the spread of diseases like *E. coli* and *Salmonella*.
 - **"Sanitizer Station" or "Handwashing Station"**: Prominently displayed near animal exhibits.
 - **"Do Not Eat or Drink in Animal Areas"**: Crucial for avoiding accidental ingestion of bacteria.
 - **"Caution: Dangerous/Unpredictable Animal"**: Placed on stalls, cages, or fences for specific, high-risk animals.
 - **"Keep Hands Outside Fence/Barrier"**: Safety reminder for petting zoos and livestock pens.
 - **"No Smoking"** signs used to inform of a fair's general no-smoking policies or to designate non-hazardous smoke-free areas are not "danger" signs and may be black, white, green, or any other color and/or may be "prohibition signs" which display a red circle with a slash and can include things like No Entry, No Smoking, No Mobile Phone Use, etc.
- **Warning signs.** indicate a serious injury could occur if you don't avoid the hazard. The sign should be orange or predominantly orange and include "WARNING."