

## Signs of the times?

March 5, 2018



Frequently, when buildings around the Lab are no longer useful, potential artifacts are retrieved and stored. Right now, there are about 100 different directional signs on hand. The signs above come from different times and places and most of them came from TA-16 (also known as S, or Sawmill, Site). While we might not know a lot about them, we thought it might be interesting to share a few of them with you.

From left to right

**“D” sign** Clearly this was meant to designate one of several structures of unknown use at 120 7<sup>th</sup> Street here in Los Alamos. A Google Maps search indicates that whatever was there is now behind the Smiths grocery store.

**Structure No. sign** The Laboratory uses signs that look very much like this one. To this day, locations around the Lab are identified as “Technical Areas” or “TAs” so each building has both a TA identifier and building number. This particular sign came from TA-21 which was known as “DP” or “Disposal of Plutonium” site.

**Person in Charge sign** We’re not sure who was once in charge, but they are probably now long gone...

Please Dim Lights sign While almost unrecognizable now due to rust, this sign once read “PLEASE DIM LIGHTS.” (see the enhanced and more readable version to the right.)

Peters-Dalton Hydro-Whirl sign This sign was produced between 1943 and 1963. We know that because beginning in 1943 the then United States Post Office Department implemented postal zones (the sign indicates *Detroit 12, Michigan*) where the number after the city and before the state was a postal zone. The five-digit ZIP codes we use today were introduced nationwide in 1963.

No Smoking sign Again, signs like this are still around the Lab but often include a mention of how far away from the buildings people need to be so smoke doesn't enter a building through air vents or any other means.

Authorized Personnel Only sign These signs are used here and elsewhere.

Amber light sign According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, amber:

“Designating the intermediate cautionary light in road traffic signals, between red (= stop) and green (= go). Also, as in... the amber-coloured light itself; hence... an indication of approaching change or danger.” Clearly this was meant to warn of some sort of potential future problem that needed to be addressed and where to get help.

Apparently, people in the U.K. are more likely to use the word “amber” where we in the U.S. use a default of “yellow.” (<https://english.stackexchange.com/questions/82920/amber-or-yellow-lights>)

If you have artifacts from work here at the Lab or from the Manhattan Project, please contact our collections specialist, Wendy Strohmeyer, at [wstrohmeyer@lanl.gov](mailto:wstrohmeyer@lanl.gov).



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