

**ASME A13.1-2023**  
(Revision of ASME A13.1-2020)

# **Scheme for the Identification of Piping Systems**

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**AN AMERICAN NATIONAL STANDARD**



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**The American Society of  
Mechanical Engineers**

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# FOREWORD

This Foreword provides a brief history of how ASME A13.1, Scheme for the Identification of Piping Systems, came to be and how it has evolved over time.

Shortly after the turn of the twentieth century, in a time of rapid industrial expansion, it became apparent that some scheme should be devised to identify piping. In 1908, an article on “Identification of Power House Piping by Colors” was read at a meeting of The American Society of Mechanical Engineers. In 1909, an article called “Standard Colors for Power Station Piping” was read at the meeting of the Association of Edison Illuminating Companies.

In 1920, the National Safety News pointed out the need for a color scheme for piping, and the following year several papers were published and reports made to various committees, notably the Prime Movers Committee of the National Electric Light Association, The American Society of Mechanical Engineers, and the U.S. Navy Department.

In the meantime, many large companies compiled their own scheme with no thought to standardization of pipe colors, even in their own plants. When personnel were shifted, accidents could and did happen as a result.

The American Standards Association [now called the American National Standards Institute (ANSI)] organized the Sectional Committee on the Identification of Piping Systems on June 14, 1922. This committee's efforts resulted in the initial publication of this Standard in 1928.

On August 23, 1950, the committee was reorganized to investigate the possibility of a revision to the Standard. It was felt that a revision was necessary because of the tremendous number of different materials being carried in pipes. After many meetings and much discussion, a revision of American Standard, Scheme for Identification of Piping Systems, was approved by the sectional committee and sponsors. It was then presented to the American Standards Association for approval and designation as an American Standard. This was granted on January 27, 1956.

In the late 1960s, the committee began discussions on the possibility of revising the 1956 standard. These discussions continued for a number of years, eventually resulting in approval by ANSI. The revision was designated as an American National Standard on June 13, 1975.

In accordance with the policy of ANSI, the committee began a review of the 1975 Standard for a possible revision in the late 1970s. This resulted in a revised edition, which was approved by ANSI and designated as an American National Standard on November 16, 1981.

Subsequent editions were approved by ANSI in 1996 and 2007.

The 2015 edition of ASME A13.1 incorporated the GHS pictograms and added a definition for *oxidizing*. ASME A13.1-2015 was approved by ANSI on October 30, 2015.

The 2020 edition of ASME A13.1 made a number of changes, including redesignating some paragraphs, revising most definitions, adding a reference to the GHS, *Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals*, and adding a new paragraph to address abandoned piping. ASME A13.1-2020 was approved by ANSI on September 1, 2020.

The 2023 edition of ASME A13.1 makes significant changes, including revising the Scope, updating each of the definitions, expanding the Legend section, and revising both the Color section and Table 4.2-1, Designation of Colors. Also, ASME A13.1 was changed from a periodic-maintenance to a continuous-maintenance Standard. ASME A13.1-2023 was approved by ANSI on August 18, 2023.