



Marking All Fire Hydrants

Dear Reader:

The following document was created from the MTAS website ([mtas.tennessee.edu](http://www.mtas.tennessee.edu)). This website is maintained daily by MTAS staff and seeks to represent the most current information regarding issues relative to Tennessee municipal government.

We hope this information will be useful to you; reference to it will assist you with many of the questions that will arise in your tenure with municipal government. However, the *Tennessee Code Annotated* and other relevant laws or regulations should always be consulted before any action is taken based upon the contents of this document.

Please feel free to contact us if you have questions or comments regarding this information or any other MTAS website material.

Sincerely,

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To fight a fire effectively, firefighters must be able to determine hydrant flows immediately upon arrival. Fire hydrants should be immediately recognizable to firefighting forces as well as to the public.

Fire hydrants should be color coded to NFPA Standard 291, *Recommended Practice for Fire Flow Testing and Marking of Hydrants*, 2019 Edition. Color-coded fire hydrants provide an immediate visual indication of available hydrant flow. Without color-coding, firefighters cannot know the flow potential of a hydrant, especially if the firefighters are responding to a mutual aid call.

The hydrant barrel should be chrome yellow unless the jurisdiction has adopted another color for their hydrants (NFPA 291 § 5.2.1.1). Other highly visible colors used by communities include white, bright red, chrome silver, and lime-yellow. In jurisdictions where no standard color has been established, the most important aspect is consistency. Standard colors should be adopted which, preferably, are the same throughout the region.

Paint the top (bonnet) and nozzle caps (discharges) appropriate colors to indicate hydrant capacity (NFPA 291 § 5.2.1.2).

Fire hydrant bonnets and caps shall be coded as follows (NFPA 291 § 5.2.1.2):

COLOR	CLASS	AVAILABLE FLOW @ 20 psi residual
BLUE	AA	1500 GPM or more
GREEN	A	1000-1499 GPM
ORANGE	B	500-999 GPM
RED	C	Below 500 GPM

NFPA recommends using reflective-type paint for easy identification at night (NFPA 291 § 5.2.1.3).

NFPA also recognizes that there are often functional differences in service provided by municipal and private hydrant systems. Therefore, NFPA specifies that non-municipal hydrants be painted a color that distinguishes them from municipal hydrants. Furthermore, violet has been established as the international color code for non-potable water. Therefore, hydrants supplied by non-potable sources should be painted violet (light purple).

The following body colors are recommended for fire hydrants:

Supply	Body Color
Municipal System:	Chrome Yellow
Private System:	Red
Non-Potable System:	Violet (Light Purple)

One of the biggest mistakes made in color-coding a hydrant is the failure to reduce the residual flow pressure to 20 psi. Many departments will color code the hydrant at whatever the flow was without taking time to chart or calculate the actual flow at 20 psi. This requires extra work but can mean the difference in color-coding in up to 50 percent of the hydrants in a given system.

NFPA 291 recommends stenciling the rated capacity of high volume hydrants on the top (NFPA 291 § 5.2.1.5).

DISCLAIMER: The letters and publications written by the MTAS consultants were written based upon the law at the time and/or a specific sets of facts. The laws referenced in the letters and publications may have changed and/or the technical advice provided may not be applicable to your city or circumstances. Always consult with your city attorney or an MTAS consultant before taking any action based on information contained in this website.

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