

# New 'Purple Paint Law' Protects Forestland from Trespassers

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**P**rior to 2016, Alabama law required landowners to either: 1) mark their property 'in a conspicuous manner,' or 2) personally communicate a 'no trespassing' message to a potential violator or intruder if they wanted to keep individuals from entering their property. Typically, landowners used yellow plastic signs with a 'Posted - No Trespassing' message placed on trees and/or fence posts to notify individuals they were not welcome on their property. Most individuals are familiar with these types of signs that appear throughout Alabama's rural and suburban landscape.

Alabama lawmakers and governor approved a 'Purple Paint' law during the 2016 Legislative session. The purpose of the law was to amend the definition of 'trespassing' found in the Code of Alabama, Title 13A, Chapter 7, Section 1. The new law allows landowners to use vertical stripes of purple paint on trees or fence posts along the property line to mark an area to warn potential intruders they will be trespassing if they enter the property. Properly posted 'No Trespassing' signs remain legal.

The revised law states the purple paint marks must meet the following requirements:

- Are vertical lines of not less than eight inches in length and not less than one inch in width.
- Are placed so that the bottom of the mark is not less than three feet from the ground or more than five feet from the ground.

- Are placed at locations that are readily visible to any person approaching the property and are no more than 100 feet apart on forestland, or 1,000 feet apart on land other than forestland.

Alabama is one of several states adopting the purple paint rule as an option for landowners. The advantages of purple paint include low cost, high visibility, and difficult removal. Plastic signs are highly visible, but have a tendency to be torn down by intruders or fall down as a result of normal tree growth.

Some states have even adopted a purple paint law to notify hunters they are about to enter property on which the landowner does not want uninvited guests. However, the requirement to conspicuously mark a property line did not and still does not apply to hunting in Alabama as all land in Alabama has been 'posted by law' for hunting purposes since 1907. Alabama hunters are required to obtain and carry written permission prior to hunting on any property in Alabama. Hunters are also expected to know the property lines and be aware of whose property they are on while hunting - whether marked or unmarked.

Marking property lines is highly recommended for several reasons. In the past, many Alabama landowners have used red, yellow, orange, or blue paint along with the highly visible plastic signs to mark their property lines. They can now use purple paint to mark their lines and at the same time warn potential trespassers. ☹

