

## Purple Paint No-Trespassing Laws

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This report provides an overview of “purple paint” no-trespassing laws and a recent Connecticut bill on this topic.

### Summary

Generally, “purple paint” laws allow landowners to use purple paint on trees or posts to mark the boundaries of their property and indicate that trespassing is not allowed. It appears that this method of marking property is typically used by landowners with wooded property or large rural lots (for example, to keep hikers, hunters, or people who fish off the property). The laws typically specify the required minimum size and placement of the paint marks.

Approximately 20 states have purple paint or similar laws. Some of these laws prescribe a color other than purple for the markings, such as [Arizona](#) (orange) and [Maryland](#) (bright blue). And some others delegate to a state agency the authority to prescribe the color, such as [Virginia](#) for which the designated agency [requires](#) aluminum or purple. Below are summaries of the laws in Maine, North Carolina, and Tennessee.

Connecticut does not have a purple paint law. During the 2023 legislative session, the Judiciary Committee heard a bill ([HB 6736](#)) that would have specified that, for the purposes of 3rd degree criminal trespass, painting the borders of a property purple is a permissible way to post the land to warn against trespassing. The committee took no action on the bill after the hearing.

## Examples of “Purple Paint” or Similar No-Trespassing Laws

### *Maine*

One form of criminal trespass in Maine is when a person, knowing that he or she is not licensed or privileged to do so, enters any place from which that person may lawfully be excluded and that is posted (i.e., marked with signs or paint in a specified manner). If the property is marked with paint under these provisions, the markings indicate that access is prohibited without permission of the landowner (or landowner’s agent).

The paint markings must be vertical lines at least one inch wide and eight inches long and may be on trees, posts, or stones. The bottoms of the markings must be three to five feet off the ground. The markings must be no more than 100 feet apart and readily visible to anyone approaching the property. They also must be present at all vehicle access entries from a public road.

The law requires the state’s Forest Service to adopt rules to determine the paint color and type. The Forest Service rules require the paint to be (1) the color “OSHA Safety Purple” or a close match to it and (2) of sufficient quality for long-term outdoor exposure (e.g., 100% exterior acrylic latex) ([Maine Forest Service Rules, 01-669, ch. 24](#)).

The law specifies that these paint markings have no effect on property boundaries and do not constitute claims for possession or adverse use. It also specifies that if a landowner posts paint markings in this manner, they also may post signs ([Me. Rev. Stat. Ann. tit. 17-A § 402](#)).

### *North Carolina*

In North Carolina, it is a misdemeanor to willfully enter lands or waters that are posted (as specified below) to hunt, fish, or trap without the written permission of the landowner, lessee, or his or her agent ([N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-159.6](#)).

This posting may be by purple paint markings or signs, notices, or posters. Generally similar to Maine’s law, if paint markings are used, they must be vertical lines at least eight inches long that are readily visible to anyone approaching the property and placed as follows:

1. on trees or posts,
2. three to five feet from the base of the tree or post (measured from the bottom of the marking), and
3. no more than 100 yards apart.

The law specifies that for the purpose of prohibiting fishing (or taking fish by any method), it is sufficient if the paint marks are placed along the stream or shoreline of a pond or lake (at most 100 yards apart) ([N.C. Gen. Stat. § 14-159.7](#)).

## ***Tennessee***

Under Tennessee law, it is generally a defense to criminal prosecution for trespassing if the person (1) reasonably believed that the property owner gave consent to enter the land, (2) did not substantially interfere with the owner's use of the property, and (3) immediately left the property upon request. But this defense is unavailable if the property owner posted the property with signs or purple paint marks meeting certain criteria.

If the property owner uses paint markings, the markings must be vertical lines at least eight inches long and one inch wide and placed as follows:

1. on trees or posts,
2. three to five feet from the ground (measured from the bottom), and
3. at locations that are reasonably likely to come to the attention of people entering the property.

In addition, even for property owners marking property in this way, they must post at least one sign at a major entry point to the property that is reasonably likely to come to the attention of people entering the property. The sign must indicate that the purple paint signifies "no trespassing" ([Tenn. Code Ann. § 39-14-405](#)).

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