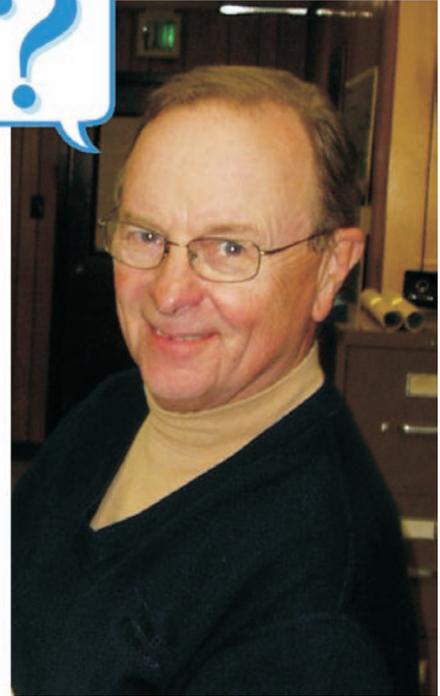


# Color me stupid!

By Dennis St. Germain

*There are numerous reasons for not using the color of a roundsling's cover as a guide to its rated capacity. In this article author Dennis St. Germain describes many of the obvious ones.*



Dennis St. Germain

**C**olor me stupid, but I don't get the idea of using color to designate a roundsling's vertical rated capacity. If this idea is supposed to make a rigging job safer, then I think it is totally irresponsible. Take a good look at the following chart compiled from various National Standards and leading producers of roundslings and you will begin to see the complexity for the end user who is trying to follow colors to select the correct capacity sling. The colors are based on lowest to highest vertical capacity and even these vary greatly among manufacturers.

The American Society of Mechanical Engineers (ASME) B30.9-6 standard for round slings addresses the color question with the following highly intelligent statement:

"Color guidelines for polyester roundsling covers are widely used to indicate the vertical rated load of roundslings; however, this is not followed by some manufacturers. Always select and use roundslings by the rated load as shown on the tag, never by color."

(The ASME does not show any colors related to the rated capacity table)

Not only are the color standards not followed by manufacturers, they are not followed by various standard writers and, therefore, there is no world-wide standard for colors. It seems that every committee that sits down to write a standard for roundslings has their own idea of the color and capacity

for a particular roundsling. Roundslings are manufactured in one country to a particular color standard and shipped to another country where the same color roundsling has a different rated capacity confusing the workers and jeopardizing the safety of the job site.

Customers call in orders specifying a quantity and length of a certain color round sling. When the sales representative inquires as to the rated capacity the customer replies they have no idea of the rated capacity, just the color. How much load can be safely handled by a particular color round sling is unknown by the very people who are going to use them; so how does color relate to safety?

I also pity the 5% of the human population who happens to be color blind and works in the rigging industry. It's hard enough for them to match up their clothes in the morning without having to worry about the difference between purple, blue, dark blue, violet, and light blue to pick out the proper sling.

Sling colors change during use, so what was yellow when new, may become black or gray from exposure to normal conditions found in steel plants, refineries, or on construction jobs. A yellow sling used in a mine could be black in a week from coal dust or red from iron ore. Workers go to a job on Monday morning with clean clothes only to find they are dirty at the end of a shift. The same dirt, dust, grease, and other contaminants that effect work clothes will

surely change the color of round slings that are exposed for longer periods of time than a single shift.

Colors only identify the vertical lifting capacity. Slings will have a lower capacity when used at an angle to the load or in a choker hitch. Slings used in a basket hitch have a higher capacity depending on the angle associated with the basket connection. It is actually rare to use a sling at the vertical capacity as designated by the color of the cover. It is impossible for an end user to memorize all of the possible rated capacities of a blue or purple or red roundsling and, therefore, the only safe way is to read the sling tag and calculate the rated capacity before making a lift with a certain angle or hitch.

I think if colors are used to determine the capacity of a roundsling that litigation of colors will surely become a big part of the rigging landscape. Unless colors are standardized worldwide and a

VRC TONS			COLORS = CAPACITY?					
.5 - 1.5	Purple	Violet	Gray	Purple				
1 - 2.3	Black	Green	Purple	Green				
1.6 - 4.2	Green	Yellow	Blue	Yellow				
2.0 - 5	Yellow	Grey	Green	Tan				
3.2 - 6	Gray	Red	Yellow	Red				
5.0 - 8	Red	Brown	Red	White				
8.0 - 10	Brown	Blue	Dark Blue	Blue				
10.0 - 12.5	Blue	Orange	Whatever	Grey				

separate standard is written that designates a definite shade of whatever color for the cover manufacturers to follow there will always be subtle differences. There will always be enough variation to promulgate product liability lawsuits that will draw in the sling producers and manufacturers of covers based on the degree of coloring and how it was interpreted by the user.

Just check out the above chart and you will see that a gray sling could have a rating anywhere from 0.5 to 12.5 tons. What about the poor guy who uses the gray sling good for only 0.5 tons to lift a 12.5 ton load? The plaintiff's attorney

could seize on this to explain why his client overloaded a gray sling rated at 0.5 tons and ruin the defense.

In most of the available standards and manufacturing tables where colors are shown to designate the vertical capacity of a roundsling there is the catch all color orange that means read the tag for the information you need to use this product safely. That's because there are not enough colors to cover all of the possible capacities. In fact, roundslings are the only sling products that can be custom designed to meet any vertical rated capacity. Simply by adding or subtracting load yarns

the sling can be form fit to a particular end use. It seems stupid that sling fabricators want to shoot themselves in the foot to eliminate the biggest single advantage of these products by designating a particular color for a single capacity.

Color me stupid, but I think users of all types of slings should be taught to read the tag to determine the capacity of the product. It seems simple enough to me that if safety on the job site means anything, that you can't possibly rely on something as unreliable as the color. **WRN**