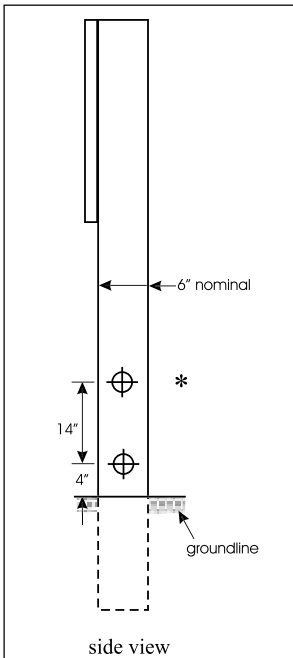


Two new MUTCD requirements

New post and support requirements do not have a phase-in period; therefore, they should be considered effective immediately.

The new crossbuck standard has a 10-year compliance period, but implementing it sooner could improve motorist safety sooner.

Typical breakaway modification for wood sign posts (4- by 6-inch)



* Hole size for larger posts:
6" x 6" - 2" diameter
6" x 8" - 3" diameter

All 4" x 6" wood posts shall be modified by having two 1 1/2" diameter holes drilled perpendicular to the roadway centerline.

Tom McDonald, Safety Circuit Rider

TWO NEW requirements in the millennium edition of the MUTCD will affect local agencies:

Post and support requirements

The following new mandate does not include a phase-in compliance period, nor is a waiver offered for low-volume roads:

"Roadside-mounted sign supports shall be breakaway, yielding, or shielded with a longitudinal barrier or crash cushion if within the clear zone," according to Section 2A.19 Lateral Offset of the millennium edition of the MUTCD. (Section 5A.04 of Part 5, Low-volume Rural Roads contains a similar statement).

To comply with this requirement, all agencies should consider

- reviewing clear zone requirements for all classifications of roads and streets in their jurisdictions,
- inspecting all posts and supports currently located within those limits for crashworthy compliance, and
- planning to replace, relocate, or shield any that do not achieve the new minimum standards.

The "Sign Posts and Supports" section of the *Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties* (Iowa Highway Research Board project TR-441) may be a beneficial reference. It provides information about commonly used materials, such as wood or steel for small signs and other devices, and supports that can be used to mount larger signs, such as aluminum, steel, and even overhead trusses.

Manufacturer information is listed for several common types of posts such as u-channel, square tube, and breakaway couplings. The features of these materials and other types occasionally installed in cities are discussed, and tips are provided for installation in challenging locations.

While not intending to favor one material or vendor over others, this information may provide local agencies with a background for making decisions about the best materials for their particular needs.

New mandate for crossbucks

Imagine driving down an unfamiliar gravel road at night. In the distance, your headlights pick out a highway-rail grade crossing (crossbuck) sign (R15-1, R15-2). But is the crossing clear? It's hard to tell in the dark.

Using retroreflective material on crossbucks and their posts, as specified in Section 8B.02 of the millennium edition of the MUTCD, may make rail-road crossings, especially passive ones, more visible and ultimately safer. The new mandate states that a strip of reflective material, two inches wide, **shall** be placed on the back blade of the crossbuck sign, unless back-to-back signs are used, and also on both the front and back sides of the supporting posts.

At night, with the reflective material in place and no train at the crossing, a vehicle's headlights will reflect steadily off the back of the opposite crossbuck. However, when a train is passing through the crossing at night, a vehicle's headlights will reflect intermittently, in an apparent flashing mode, off the back of the opposite crossbuck.

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MUTCD phases in most requirements

Unlike new post and support requirements, which are effective immediately, 24 other revisions in the millennium edition of the MUTCD that could impact local agencies do not require immediate action. Instead, compliance dates are listed to allow orderly phase-in periods for each change. A listing of the MUTCD sections containing changes with compliance dates can be found on an FHWA web page, mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/kno-compliance.htm.

Connecting with small communities

Duane Smith, Associate Director for Outreach

IOWA'S Local Technical Assistance Program (LTAP) and the Iowa chapter of the American Public Works Association (APWA) have a common goal: connecting with small communities. LTAP wants to make training opportunities more convenient for transportation staff in small communities, and APWA is interested in including more communities in its activities and events.

People in smaller communities may not have the opportunity to participate in many APWA or LTAP activities. This may be due to a lack of funding, low staffing (a one-person shop can't be closed all day), or lack of approval to attend.

Along with public works directors and APWA members Bret Hodne (West Des Moines), Al Olson (Ankeny), John Klostermann (Dubuque), Stan Ericson (Bettendorf), Bart Weller (Clive), and Greg Parker (Cedar Rapids), I am part of a committee that is working together to find new ways of reaching public works employees in smaller communities.

As part of this effort, during the last two years, we have held area meetings with staffs from small communities. We sent personal invitations to communities within a two-hour driving distance of host cities, which included Bettendorf, Burlington, Cedar Rapids, Clive, and Harlan. In general, 35–40 people attended each meeting.

Meetings included a short presentation on a public works topic, a discussion of the topic, an open discussion in smaller groups, and a tour of the host city's public works facilities. We also surveyed the participants to learn how APWA and LTAP could better serve them.

The consensus of the survey was that employees in small communities

- normally cannot travel overnight,
- usually have to report to work and get daily activities started before attending training events,
- need to be back to their home base at the end of the day to close up shop,
- would have funding for a minimal registration fee that would cover the cost of lunch, and
- would like to meet approximately twice a year

APWA and LTAP will keep these issues in mind as we plan additional activities that involve small communities. One thing seems apparent. Larger cities need to become more involved with smaller cities by inviting them to and hosting them at APWA meetings and training events. LTAP is available to coordinate and provide subject matter.

By working together, all cities, large and small, can provide quality training and professional development opportunities for their employees.

For more information

Contact me anytime for more information about this new APWA/LTAP initiative, 515-294-8103, desmith@iastate.edu. •

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The standard has a 10-year compliance period, but implementing it sooner where railroad crossing crashes/violations have occurred could improve motorist safety.

In Iowa, it is generally accepted that the crossbuck signs and supports are the responsibility of the railroad company, so road agencies may tend to ignore this requirement. However, Section 8A of the MUTCD implies that highway agencies have a joint responsibility to ensure appropriate and proper traffic control devices at all locations. Therefore, it may be advisable for agencies to initiate contact with rail company authorities to discuss the new standardized requirements of the MUTCD, especially the installation of retroreflective tape on crossbuck signs and supports.

For more information

Please contact me if you have questions about these new MUTCD standards, tmcdonal@iastate.edu, 515-294-6384.

Iowa Traffic Control Devices and Pavement Markings: A Manual for Cities and Counties is available online: www.ctre.iastate.edu/pubs/icd/index.htm. •