

From DECEMBER 2010 WTA MAGAZINE



U.S. Department
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Federal Highway
Administration

Office of the Administrator

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1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

In Reply Refer To:
HOTO-1

Mr. Anthony R. Giancola
Executive Director
National Association of County Engineers
25 Massachusetts Ave., NW., Suite 580
Washington, DC 20001

NOV 02 2010

Dear Mr. Giancola:

Recently, a number of media outlets have published stories about the Federal standards for Street Name signs and deadlines to comply with these standards. Some of these articles contain factually incorrect information. While we will continue to work with various media outlets to get the correct information published, I want to take this opportunity to provide you accurate details of applicable Federal requirements for such signs.

Federal requirements for Street Name signs are contained in the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices for Streets and Highways (MUTCD). Recently, the Federal Highway Administration went through a rulemaking process to issue and adopt the 2009 edition of the MUTCD. This edition adopted new requirements and carried forward previous requirements related to Street Name signs.

The MUTCD requires all Street Name signs, as well as most other signs, to be maintained to a minimum level of retroreflectivity. This sign retroreflectivity requirement was established in 2007 as a result of a congressional directive and has two specific compliance dates for replacing signs: January 2018 for Street Name and other overhead signs, and January 2015 for regulatory, warning, and other post-mounted signs. These compliance dates are based on useful service life of signs. Only signs that fall below minimum retroreflectivity levels need to be replaced, NOT all signs.

When you decide to replace Street Name signs, here are key MUTCD requirements:

- The lettering for Street Name signs shall be composed of a combination of lower-case letters with initial upper-case letters. This requirement applies immediately to any new Street Name signs. There is no specific compliance date for replacement of existing Street Name signs that use all capital lettering. Existing Street Name signs using all capital letters can remain in place until they need to be replaced due to end of service life or some other reason. As a result, agencies do not incur any additional cost to meet this MUTCD requirement.

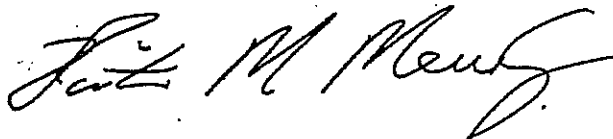


- The only acceptable background colors for Street Name signs are green, blue, and brown (with a white legend), and white (with a black legend). This requirement applies immediately to any new Street Name signs. Existing Street Name signs that have other background colors can remain in place until they need to be replaced due to end of service life or some other reason.

In addition to the requirements listed above, the MUTCD also contains a number of other very important recommendations related to Street Name signs, such as letter heights. I strongly urge you to review the relevant sections of the MUTCD very carefully before you embark upon any traffic control device replacement initiative.

We hope you will share this with your membership. Please feel free to contact Hari Kalla at Hari.Kalla@dot.gov if you have any questions related to the MUTCD. You can also access the MUTCD online at <http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/>.

Sincerely,



Victor M. Mendez
Administrator



Support:

08 The recommended minimum letter heights for Street Name signs are summarized in Table 2D-2.

Table 2D-2. Recommended Minimum Letter Heights on Street Name Signs

Type of Mounting	Type of Street or Highway	Speed Limit	Recommended Minimum Letter Height	
			Initial Upper-Case	Lower-Case
Overhead	All types	All speed limits	12 inches	9 inches
Post-mounted	Multi-lane	More than 40 mph	8 inches	6 inches
Post-mounted	Multi-lane	40 mph or less	6 inches	4.5 inches
Post-mounted	2-lane	All speed limits	6 inches*	4.5 inches*

* On local two-lane streets with speed limits of 25 mph or less, 4-inch initial upper-case letters with 3-inch lower-case letters may be used.

Option:

09 Supplementary lettering to indicate the type of street (such as Street, Avenue, or Road) or the section of the city (such as NW) on the D3-1 and D3-1a signs may be in smaller lettering, composed of initial upper-case letters at least 3 inches in height and lower-case letters at least 2.25 inches in height. Conventional abbreviations (see Section 1A.15) may be used except for the street name itself.