

OUTDOOR ADVERTISING CONTROL

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q. Why does PennDOT control outdoor advertising signs?

A. PennDOT is required by law to control outdoor advertising signs adjacent to interstate and federal-aid primary highways in order to receive its full share of federal highway funds, which are necessary to build and maintain Pennsylvania's roadways. By ensuring the orderly and effective display of outdoor advertising, we remain consistent with national policy to protect the public's investment in our highways. We also protect Pennsylvania's natural beauty.

Q. Where can I place my sign?

A. Generally along federal-aid primary highways and interstates, signs may only be erected in commercial or industrial areas subject to the limitations concerning size, spacing between signs, and lighting. Locations are more restrictive next to interstate highways. Along state routes without federal funding, a sign may not encroach the right-of-way without a permit. Contact your local PennDOT District office for details.

Q. Can my sign be placed in the highway's right-of-way?

A. No. Only official traffic signs can be put in the right-of-way areas. This includes signs placed on utility poles and other small temporary or portable signs.

Q. Do I need a permit to erect a sign?

A. Whether you need a permit for your sign depends on whether the sign is an on-premise or off-premise sign along a federal-aid primary highway or interstate. Along state routes without federal funding, a permit is only needed if a sign will encroach on the right-of-way area.

On-premise signs, which advertise products or services available on the property where the sign will be located, have few restrictions. They generally do not require an application or permit; however, if such a sign will be located further than 50 feet from the building or parking lot or the property is along an interstate highway, other factors may need to be considered. You should check with PennDOT first.

Off-premise signs are those which advertise something not sold on the property where the sign will be located. These signs DO require permits, and must meet size, lighting, and spacing requirements. Before you erect an off-premise commercial advertising sign, an application must be submitted to a PennDOT District office and a permit obtained. An annual permit fee is also required.

Q. If my sign complies with state law; must it also comply with local laws?

A. Yes. Before PennDOT will issue a sign permit, the proposed sign must also meet all applicable county and municipal requirements.

Q. Who is responsible for an illegal sign?

A. The person who erects or maintains an illegal sign, as well as the individual who allows an illegal sign to exist on his or her property is responsible for the sign.

Q. What is PennDOT's responsibility for an illegal sign?

A. PennDOT is obligated by law to remove illegal signs. PennDOT will first send a written request to the responsible person(s) to remove the sign. If not removed, PennDOT is authorized by law to enter private property to remove the illegal sign and to collect the cost of removal from the responsible person(s). The law also provides a \$500 per day fine for the person(s) responsible for the illegal sign, upon summary conviction.

Q. Can I erect a sign with flashing lights or arrows?

A. No. Such signs are prohibited because they could distract motorists and pose a safety hazard.

Q. Are electronic message signs allowed?

A. Temporary signs as those noted above which are placed on private property (off the highway right-of-way) with the property owner's permission, are generally regarded as on-premise signs and do not require a permit. They should be removed as soon as they have served their purpose.

Q. Why can't objects be placed in the right-of-way?

A. For two reasons: public safety and legal liability. These objects may interfere with a driver's view of other traffic, official traffic signs, and traffic signals. Accidents may be a result of obstruction. If a motorist collides with an illegally placed object, the owner of the object and PennDOT may be sued for the resulting injuries and damages.

Q. How do we get our town, borough, village, and etc. name on the signs on an interstate highway?

A. The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has control over interstate highway signs with stringent guidelines. Contact the Engineering District Traffic Unit that will work with you in making a request to the FHWA.

Q. How can I get more information about right-of-way encroachments and control of outdoor advertising signs?

A. Contact PENNDOT District 11.0 Engineering Office (Allegheny, Beaver and Lawrence Counties) (412) 429-4848