

4 Signs, Pavement Markings and Signals

Signs, pavement markings and signals are all ways of communicating. They provide information about regulations, highway routes, directions, places of interest and cautions. They include regulatory, warning and guide signs. This chapter presents important information about signs, pavement markings and signals. Obeying signs, traffic signals and markings will help to keep you safe.

REGULATORY SIGNS



Regulatory signs that control moving traffic are always red and white or black and white. “Wrong Way,” “Do Not Enter,” “Yield” and “Stop” are examples of signs with red backgrounds. Regulatory signs that control parking may be green and white.



The yield sign indicates a driver must slow down and give way to all traffic and pedestrians.



The shape of this sign indicates stop. Stop and give the right-of-way to pedestrians and all cross traffic before moving forward. You must stop behind a marked or unmarked crosswalk that joins sidewalks on opposite sides of the street, or behind a marked stop line. If there is no pavement marking or crosswalk, stop before entering the intersection where traffic coming from all directions is visible.





A red circle with a line through it always means “no,” such as “no entry.”

This sign means do not turn around in the middle of a street or an intersection.



These two signs are sometimes used together and mean do not pass. The yellow pennant sign will be posted on the left side of the road. The white sign will be posted on the right side.

This sign follows the do not pass sign. It is on the right side of the road. It marks the end of a no-passing zone. You may then pass when it is safe to do so.



This sign means traffic in the right lane must turn right. Traffic in the second lane should either continue driving straight or turn right. A similar sign may be used for left-turning traffic.

This sign means no right turn. If the arrow points to the left, the sign means no left turn.



This sign informs or warns not to drive across the median (divider strip) or emergency crossover of a freeway. It is against the law for anyone to cross a freeway median – except for law enforcement, emergency or maintenance vehicles. To change directions on a freeway, drive to the next exit, get off and re-enter the freeway in the other direction.



This sign directs traffic to the right of a roadway feature or an obstruction.

This sign is posted over a highway lane that is used only for making a left turn. Traffic from both directions will be using this lane. Never use a turning lane as a merge lane to pull out into traffic or to overtake and pass other vehicles.



Located at intersections, this sign means do not turn until the light turns green.

This type of sign shows the maximum speeds allowed on a freeway, weather permitting.



This sign shows the lane use for a roundabout. The left lane is for traffic traveling left and through the intersection. The right lane is for traffic traveling right and through the intersection.

WARNING SIGNS

Exit and entrance signs at freeway ramps display the maximum recommended safe speed to drive while on the ramp under ideal weather conditions.

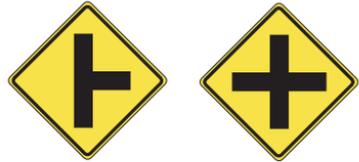


The following signs warn of a curve or sharp turn ahead. If the curve is too sharp to drive at the posted speed limit, an advisory speed sign is attached to indicate the fastest recommended speed in ideal weather conditions. Slow down before entering the curve.

If the speed limit is not posted before a curve, judge how sharp the curve is and change speed accordingly. If you cannot see around a curve, slow down more than normal. When driving around a curve, the vehicle will tend to move to the outside of the curve.



These signs show an upcoming side or cross road. Look for other vehicles entering or leaving the roadway.



This sign is posted where two lanes come together to form one lane.

This sign means prepare to yield ahead.



These signs mean a lane ends ahead and a driver must merge into the proper lane. However, yield the right-of-way to vehicles already in the left lane, or in the right lane in the case of a “lane ends merge right” sign.





This sign shows the road ahead has two-way traffic.

This sign indicates that a driver is approaching a roundabout intersection. When an advisory speed panel is posted below the sign, slow down to the recommended speed.



This sign warns of a steep hill. You may need to slow down at the top or change to a lower gear.

This sign cautions that a section of the road may be more slippery when weather conditions are bad. Make sure to slow down when the road is wet or icy.



This sign marks a traffic island or obstruction. Drive to either side.

This sign is used to remind drivers that they are going from a divided highway to a two-way roadway.



This sign means that school children may be crossing. Slow down and watch for them. Traffic controls near school areas may include school crosswalk lines, stop lines, curb markings, word and symbol markings, special school speed limits and school crosswalk signs.

Watch for adult crossing guards and student safety patrols helping children cross streets safely. Vehicles must stop for crossing guards with a stop sign upraised and may not continue until the crossing guard has moved completely out of the intersection.

When you see any of these warning signs, be alert for bicyclists, pedestrians or both entering or crossing the road. Drive with caution.



This sign informs or warns you that a bridge or underpass is ahead with a clearance of only 12 feet, 6 inches. Know the height of your vehicle and load.

This sign means no trucks allowed.



This sign means prepare to stop ahead.

INCIDENT MANAGEMENT SIGNS

A traffic incident is an emergency occurrence such as a crash, a natural disaster or other unplanned event that affects or impedes the normal flow of traffic. Temporary traffic incident management warning and guide signs usually have a black legend and border on a fluorescent pink background.

These are examples of signs used to inform road users of a roadway emergency and provide guidance about driving through or around the area. Other examples of these types of signs include Detour, Exit Closed, Center Lane Closed Ahead and End Detour.

Incident management signs serve to protect responders and others involved in working at the scene and will aid in moving motorists expeditiously past or around



the traffic incident, reducing the likelihood of further traffic crashes and other problems. Local media reports about traffic incidents can also serve to alert motorists about any temporary traffic controls in effect.

SLOW-MOVING VEHICLES

This sign on the back of a slow-moving vehicle is a warning to slow down. It means the vehicle cannot travel faster than 25 mph. Do not get impatient if behind one of these vehicles. The driver will usually try to pull over to the side whenever possible to prevent traffic back-ups.



GUIDE SIGNS

Guide signs, including those for motorist services, parks and public recreation areas, tell what is available ahead. Some show distance, destination and direction.



NO BARRIERS TO
PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES



ROUTE MARKERS

Route markers identify highways by number and symbol as part of national, state or local systems.



Limited-access interstate freeway sign.

U.S. highway sign.



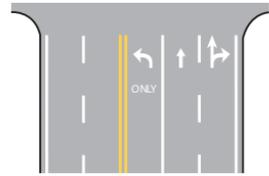
State highway sign.



County route marker.

PAVEMENT MARKINGS

Pavement markings are white or yellow and, like highway signs, warn, regulate and inform drivers.



WHITE LINES

White lines separate traffic lanes moving in the same direction.

They include:

Broken white lines: On roadways that have more than one lane moving in one direction, broken white lines separate traffic lanes. Drive between these lines. Never straddle them. (See Figure 4-1.)

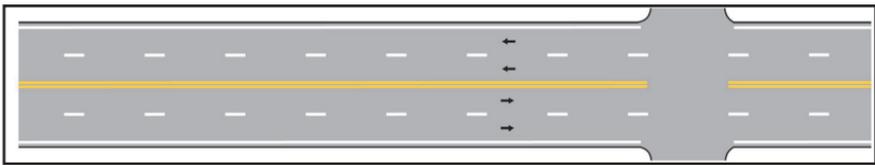
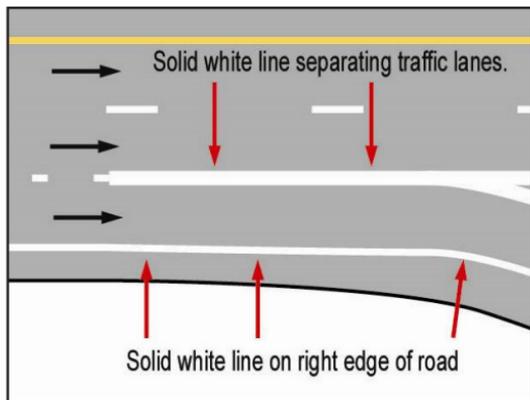


Figure 4-1

Solid white lines: Solid white lines mark the right edge of the road. Often called fog lines, solid white lines help you stay on the road at night or in bad weather. Passing to the right of another vehicle by crossing a solid white line that marks the right edge of the roadway is prohibited, even if the shoulder is paved.

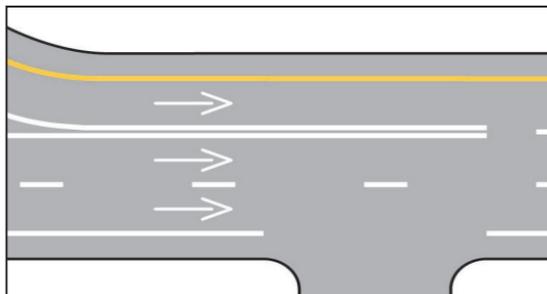
Solid white lines are also used to separate lanes of traffic moving in the same direction.

Crossing a solid white line is not recommended. These white lines may designate sharp curves, freeway



acceleration and deceleration lanes and other parts of the road where lane changes are considered dangerous.

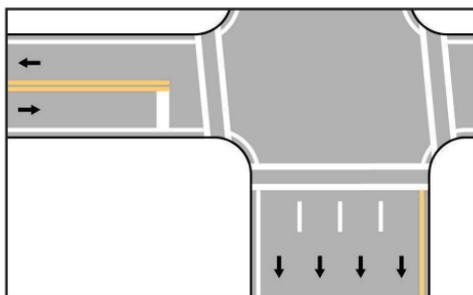
A **double solid white line** is used to show a travel path where driving in the same direction is permitted on both sides of the line but crossing the line is prohibited.



LINES FOR SAFETY REASONS

These lines separate traffic for safety reasons, such as bicycle ways, pedestrian ways or where one lane of traffic is usually traveling at a higher speed than the other lane.

Crosswalk lines: Solid white lines mark many pedestrian crosswalks. They are painted all the way across the pavement. Crosswalks are also indicated by white stripes placed on the road in the direction of traffic.



Crosswalks are placed at intersections and sometimes between intersections. Stop the vehicle behind the crosswalk line.

Stop lines: Wide white lines painted across a traffic lane mark where you must stop your vehicle at intersections. This keeps the vehicle out of the way of pedestrians and cross traffic. If there are no stop lines or crosswalks, stop the vehicle before entering the intersection. Whether or not there is a stop line, make sure you are able to see traffic from all directions before proceeding.

Directional arrows: Wide white arrows painted down the center of the traffic lane indicate the direction that the vehicle must travel. In the graphic provided, the arrow pointing to the right indicates that all vehicles in this lane must turn right. The next lane may go straight or turn right. Always check for traffic and pedestrians before proceeding or completing your turn. (See Figure 4-2.)

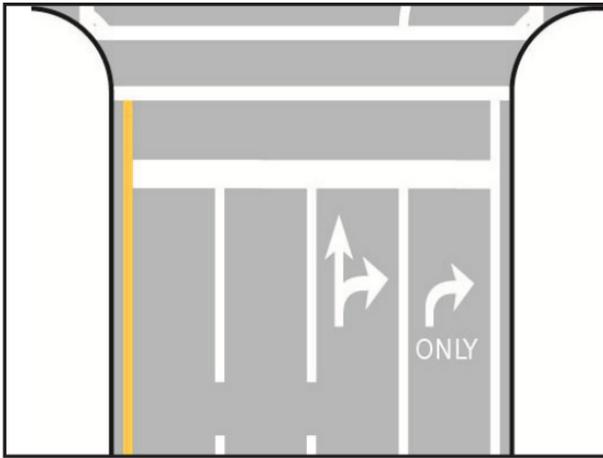


Figure 4-2

Bicycle lanes: A bicycle lane is a portion of the roadway with pavement markings and signs exclusively for bicyclists. This lane shall not be used by motorists as a driving lane or for parking.

Sharrows: Sharrows are pavement markings that assist bicyclists in determining the appropriate line of travel. They also alert motorists that bicyclists may be traveling in that lane and to pass with sufficient clearance.

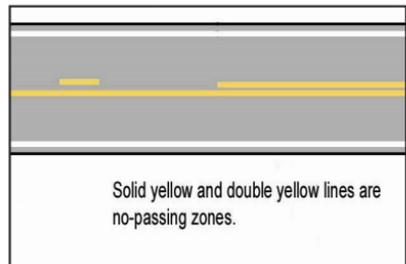


YELLOW LINES

Yellow lines separate traffic lanes moving in opposite directions. They include solid, broken and center-lane lines.

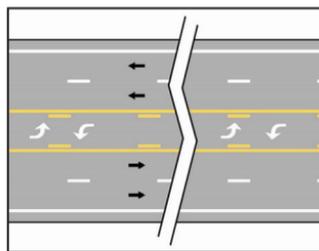
Broken yellow lines: A single broken yellow line usually marks the center line of a two-way roadway where a vehicle may pass if it is safe.

Solid yellow lines: If a solid yellow line is on your side of the center line, do not cross it to pass. On a four-lane divided roadway or a one-way road, a solid yellow line usually marks the left edge of the pavement. A double solid yellow



line down the middle of a two-lane roadway means that passing is not allowed for vehicles traveling in either direction.

Center lane, left-turn-only: Many roads have a center left-turn only lane to help traffic flow more smoothly. Each outside edge of this lane is marked with a solid yellow line with broken yellow lines on the inside edges. Left turns must be made from within this lane and may be made from either direction. Using this lane to pass other vehicles or as a merge lane is both dangerous and illegal.



YIELD LINES

Yield lines are typically found at roundabout intersections and mid-block crosswalks and help regulate the flow of traffic. When yielding to traffic or pedestrians, make sure to stop behind the yield lines. There are two types of yield lines:

White triangular symbols: White triangles painted across a traffic lane mean be ready to stop and yield to traffic. (See Figure 4-3.)

Dashed white lines: Dashed white lines painted across a roundabout's traffic lane indicate you should yield to traffic. (See Figure 4-4.)



Figure 4-3

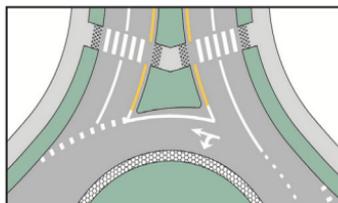
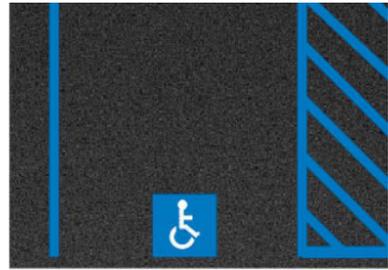


Figure 4-4

VAN-ACCESSIBLE DISABILITY PARKING SPACES

Van-accessible parking: Van-accessible parking spaces are wider than standard parking spaces. This provides space for the van's wheelchair lift and ramp, allowing the person with a disability room

to exit and enter the vehicle. For this reason, it is extremely important not to park on the blue-striped area of the van-accessible parking space. Doing so may prevent the person with a disability from getting in or out of the vehicle.



TRAFFIC CONTROL SIGNALS

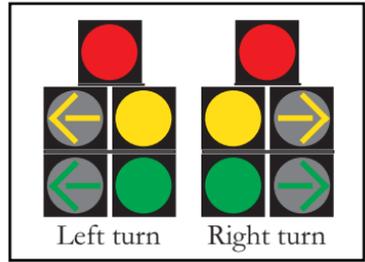
Traffic signals control traffic at intersections. It is illegal to drive across public or private property, such as a store parking lot, to avoid a traffic-control device. Combinations of traffic signals, signs, pavement markings and other traffic-control devices may be used at railroad crossings, schools, street and highway construction and maintenance operations. Pedestrian signals control pedestrian traffic. Always give the right-of-way to pedestrians.

Traffic signals: A **red light** means stop. It is at the top of a traffic signal in Michigan. Stop the vehicle behind a crosswalk or stop line. A **yellow light** means the green signal has ended and the signal is about to turn red. You are required to stop on a yellow light. If you cannot stop safely, do not speed up but drive cautiously through the intersection. A **green light** means proceed cautiously after checking for pedestrians and vehicles. If a traffic light is not working at an intersection, and there are no law enforcement officers or alternate traffic signal devices present to control the flow of traffic, you should follow the basic right-of-way rules. These include yielding to vehicles that reach the intersection before you, to those on your right if you reach the intersection at the same time, and when turning left, giving right-of-way to oncoming traffic.

The 5-section head signal: The 5-section head signal or “doghouse signal” is used to regulate left or right turns at intersections. This type of signal has red, green and yellow lights along with a yellow and a green turn arrow. When the green arrow is lit, turning drivers have a “protected turn,” meaning all oncoming or

conflicting traffic is stopped. When the green light is lit, turning drivers may complete their turn when oncoming traffic has cleared.

When either the yellow light or yellow arrow is lit, the signal is about to change to red and drivers must stop if they have not already entered the intersection or cannot safely stop. If they have already entered the intersection, they must proceed through their turn with caution after making sure traffic is clear.



A flashing red light means come to a full stop. Proceed when the road is clear.



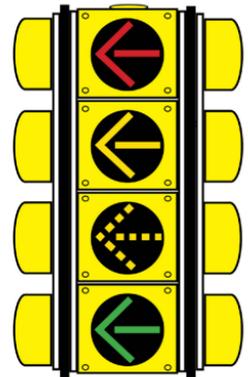
A flashing yellow light means proceed carefully through the intersection. Scan across traffic in both directions.



A steady green arrow means you may proceed with caution in the direction of the arrow if the way is clear. Yield the right-of-way to pedestrians in the intersection. Traffic coming toward you should stop.

Research from the Federal Highway Administration shows that by reconfiguring the signal arrows used for left turns, traffic moves more efficiently through intersections and the chances for crashes are reduced.

The **flashing yellow arrow left-turn signal head** has four separate lenses. The lens at the top is a solid red arrow. The next signal below it is a solid yellow arrow, then a flashing yellow arrow, and finally, a solid green arrow at the bottom. Each arrow specifies



what actions are permitted. This signal will be standard throughout the United States.

A solid red arrow means you must stop. You cannot turn until the signal changes.

A solid yellow arrow warns you that the left turn signal is about to change to red. If you are approaching the intersection, you must stop. However, if you are already within the intersection and there is no conflicting traffic present, you may complete your left turn.

A flashing yellow arrow allows you to turn left when oncoming traffic, which has a green light, is clear. Be sure that there is an adequate gap in the oncoming traffic and that there are no pedestrians or bicyclists crossing before making your turn.

A solid green arrow indicates that oncoming traffic is stopped and you may turn left. Proceed with caution. At intersections equipped with vehicle-detection cameras or in-pavement sensors, this sequence may be skipped if there are no left-turning vehicles.

TRAFFIC CONTROL SYSTEMS FOR RAILROAD CROSSINGS

Traffic control systems for railroad crossings include all signs, signals, markings and illuminated devices that permit safe and efficient movement of both rail and highway traffic. Be cautious, an approaching train is closer and moving faster than it appears. Trains cannot stop at railroad crossings. It is much harder and takes much longer for a train to stop, up to a mile in most cases. It could be fatal to ignore a signal or try to cross in front of a train. Whether you are on foot, on a bicycle or in a vehicle, cross railroad tracks only at designated crossings. It is dangerous and illegal to walk down the tracks.

When approaching a railroad crossing that does not have a signal or a gate, slow down and look both ways. This is good advice even if a signal crossing does not indicate a train is coming.

Railroad crossing: This sign warns of a railroad crossing ahead. If a train is coming, all



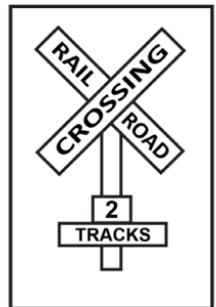
vehicles must stop no more than 50 feet or less than 15 feet from the tracks. Trains overhang the tracks by at least three feet on each side.

If there is more than one set of tracks, check carefully for other trains that may be coming. Do not cross the tracks until all trains have passed. When the road is snow covered, proceed over tracks with enough speed so you will not get stuck. Avoid changing gears while crossing the tracks.

When you see devices that warn of railroad crossings and possible oncoming trains:

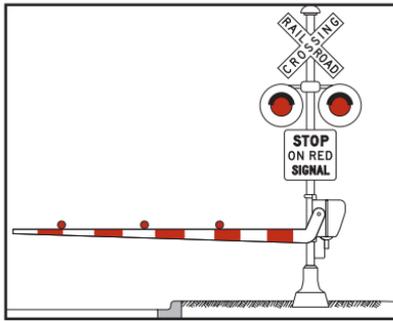
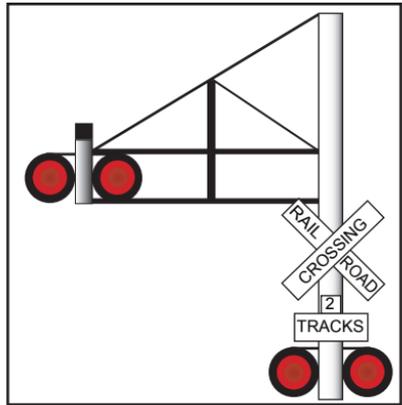
- Slow down and be ready to stop.
- School buses, vehicles carrying passengers for hire, gasoline trucks and other vehicles carrying hazardous materials must stop and make sure no train is coming, even if there is no stop sign or railroad crossing signal.
- If there is a stop sign at the crossing, you must stop whether or not a train is coming.
- Be careful not to get “trapped” on railroad tracks by a line of traffic backed up by a signal.
- If your vehicle becomes hung up on or stalls on the tracks, get everyone out of the vehicle and as far away from the tracks as possible, even if you do not see an approaching train. Notify authorities by calling 911, the local law enforcement or the emergency number posted at the crossing.

Passive railroad crossings. Passive railroad crossings do not have flashing lights or gates to warn of approaching trains. Instead, they use crossing signs, pavement markings or crossbucks located just before or at a railroad crossing to alert drivers to look for trains. For example, this railroad sign identifies the location and number of railroad tracks.



Slow down or stop as necessary and yield to any rail traffic. Do not cross without checking the track in both directions for a train. Be sure all tracks are clear before proceeding and never race a train in an attempt to cross ahead of it.

Active railroad control systems inform road users of the presence of a train. These systems may include combinations of gates, flashing-light signals, message signs and bells or other audible warning devices.

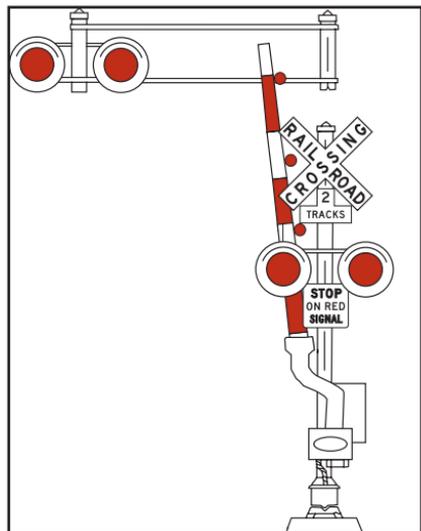


Post-mounted and overhead flashing-light signals may be used separately or in combination with each other. They may also be used without automatic gates.

This active railroad control system has overhead and post-mounted flashing lights and an automatic gate.

No matter what system you encounter:

- Stop when the bells are ringing, the lights are flashing or the gate is down or in motion.
- Do not drive through, around or under any railroad crossing system.
- Once the train has passed, do not proceed until the gates are raised, signals stop flashing, bells stop ringing and you are sure that all tracks are clear.



WARNING SIGNS FOR CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

Warning signs in construction, maintenance or other designated work areas are diamond-shaped with black lettering on an orange or yellow background.



A combination of signs, signals, lighting devices, markings, barricades, routing and hand-signaling devices may be used around road construction, utility work and maintenance and surveying operations.

Construction and maintenance signs may mean part of a lane, an entire lane or the whole road is blocked. These signs are also used when work is being done adjacent to the roadway, on shoulders or in ditch areas.

Construction zones can be for a short period of time, or last one or more construction seasons. Drivers are made aware of such zones by signs posted in advance.

Watch for warning sign messages and obey them as directed. Drive defensively to avoid problems. Be patient and everyone will travel through construction zones safely. Look carefully for construction workers or moving equipment.

Construction workers also have the authority to direct traffic in work zones and their directions should be followed even if they conflict with an existing traffic control device.

When going through a designated work area, pay attention to the posted speed limits. For most construction, maintenance or surveying activities, the speed limit is 45 mph unless posted differently. Work zones may limit speeds to 45 mph where workers are present, yet allow traffic to return to the normally posted speed when workers are absent. This allows traffic to move at full speed when safe to do so while requiring motorists to watch for workers and slow down when construction in a work zone is active.

Fines are doubled for all moving violations in work zones. In addition, motorists caught speeding in construction zones face increased points on their driving records.

Under the law, motorists will be assessed:

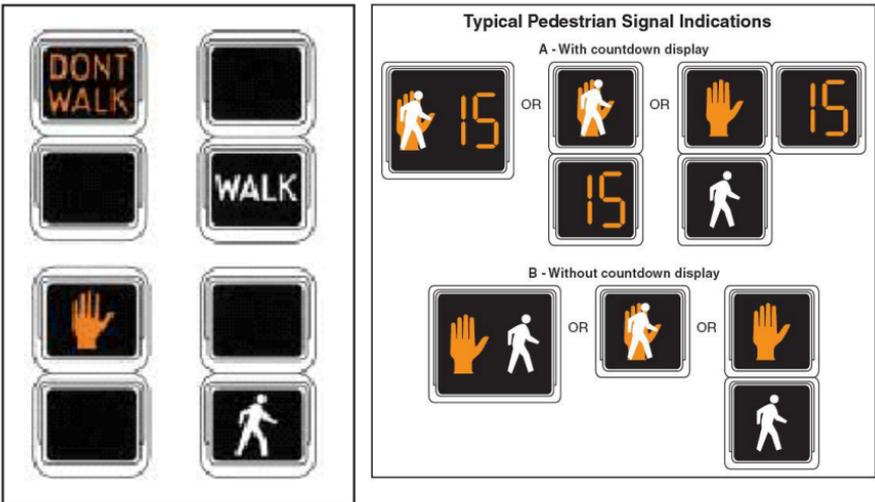
- 3 points for speeding 10 mph or less over the posted limit.
- 4 points for speeding more than 10 mph but not more than 15 mph over the limit.
- 5 points for speeding more than 15 mph over the limit.

Motorists who have accumulated 12 or more points in a two-year period will be required to undergo a driver assessment reexamination.

Motorists causing injury or death to any person in a work zone are subject to fines of up to \$7,500 and imprisonment of up to 15 years.

PEDESTRIAN SIGNALS

Pedestrian signals are used to control the movement of people at specific crossing points along the road or at an intersection. The white symbol of a walking person means to “walk,” and a red upraised hand means “do not walk.” Some use the words “WALK” and “DONT WALK.”



Pedestrian signals may include an audible or visual “countdown” indicating how much time is left before the signal changes. Do not start crossing a road when either the upraised hand or the DONT

WALK images are flashing. If you are partway across and the signal changes to a flashing mode, complete your crossing. Drivers should be cautious, especially if turning, when pedestrians are present.

Pedestrian Hybrid Beacon signals (known as “HAWK” signals) are a crossing device to alert drivers to the presence of pedestrians. There are six steps to the HAWK signal sequence.

1. **Dark** – The signal stays dark until activated by a pedestrian. Proceed with caution when the signal is dark.
2. **Flashing Yellow** – The signal will flash yellow once it is activated. Slow down and be prepared to stop.
3. **Steady Yellow** – Stop. If it is unsafe to stop, proceed with caution.
4. **Solid Red** – Stop and remain stopped.
5. **Alternately Flashing Red** – Stop and proceed only when clear.
6. **Dark** – Signal sequence is completed and HAWK signal turns dark until activated again.

