

GUIDELINES FOR THE PROPER INSTALLATION OF MAILBOXES

It's inevitable. Every now and then a plow truck will damage a mailbox. Accidents with mailboxes are a source of potential friction between residents and the highway department.

According to AASHTO, "70 to 100 people die annually in the United States in vehicles striking mailboxes where the design of the mailbox, and especially its support, can be shown to have contributed to the severity of the accident."

The U.S. Postal Service has not limited the extent to which towns can regulate their own highways. In fact, postal customers are explicitly required to obey any local regulations when erecting mailboxes (39 CFR, Sec. 111.2(a); Domestic Mail Manual, Sec. D041.2.7).

The U.S. Postal Service regulations require a clear approach to the mailbox including removing snow, or not piling snow in front of mailboxes. If USPS employees are impeded in reaching a mail receptacle, the postmaster may withdraw delivery service.

The use of massive rigid mailbox supports such as bricks around the mailbox, heavy metal posts, concrete posts, and items of farm equipment, such as milk cans filled with concrete, must not be used.

The front of all mailboxes and any optional boxes must be at least three feet from the paved portion of the road surface. The mailbox container must be at least forty-two inches, but not exceed forty-eight inches, above the road surface. AASHTO's Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways states that if a mailbox is located within the "safety clear zone" it must have breakaway supports.

"Boxes should be placed only on the right-hand side of the highway in the direction of travel of the carrier, except on one-way streets where there may be places on the left-hand side. It is undesirable to require pedestrian travel along the shoulder. However, this may be a preferred solution for distances up to 60 meters (10.2 feet) when compared to alternatives, such as constructing a turnout in a deep cut, placing a mailbox just beyond a sharp crest vertical curve (poor sight distance),

or constructing two or more closely spaced turnouts." See AASHTO 1994 Guide page 8.

"Most vehicles stopped at a mailbox will be clear of the traveled way when the mailbox is placed outside a 2.4 meter (about 8-foot) wide usable shoulder or turnout. This position is recommended for most rural highways. For high-volume, high-speed highways, it is recommended that a 3 meter (about 10-foot) wide turnout should be provided where the shoulder is not 3 meters (at least 10 feet) wide. Where conditions justify, 3.6 meters (about 12 feet) wide turnouts should be provided" according to AASHTO 1994 Guide page 8.

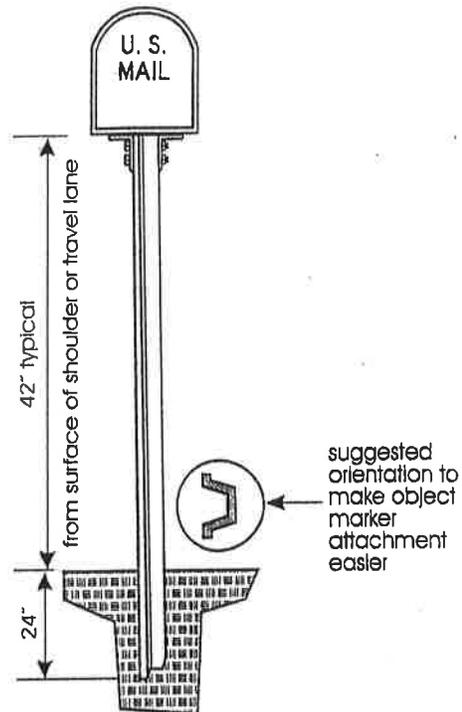
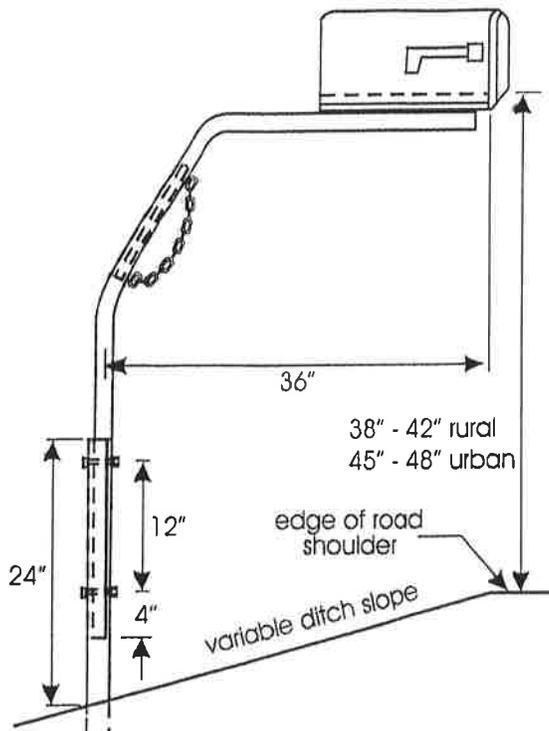
TYPE OF SUPPORTS

Use only 1 support for 1 box or group of boxes.
Wood posts: 100 mm (about 4") diameter if round; 100 mm x 100 mm (about 4 x 4") if rectangular.
Metal pipes: 38 - 50 mm (about 1.5-2") inside diameter standard steel, or aluminum.

SUPPORTS SHOULD

1. Yield or collapse if struck.
2. Bend or fall away from vehicle.
3. Not create severe deceleration.
4. "Not be embedded over 600 mm (24") into the ground. A metal post shall not be fitted with an anchor plate, but it may have an anti-twist device that extends no more than 250 mm (about 10") below ground surface." AASHTO 1994 Guide page 22.
5. Not be set in concrete.
6. The minimum spacing between the centers of support posts shall be 3/4 the height of the post above the ground line.
7. No more than two mailboxes may be mounted on a support structure unless the support structure and mailbox arrangement have been shown to be safe by crash testing.





LOCATION OF MAILBOXES

1. Should be on right side of road in direction of delivery travel.
2. Servicing vehicle should be removed from roadway.
3. Mailbox face should be no closer than edge of shoulder 2.4 meters (about 8' from) roadway.
4. Mailbox should not block sight distance.
5. Mailbox should be behind existing guardrail if possible.
6. At intersections mailbox shall be located a minimum of 30 meters (about 100 feet) beyond the intersecting road. Increase by 60 meters (about 195 feet) if ADT exceeds 400 vehicles per day. See figure 4 in the AASHTO Guide.
7. The bottom of the mailbox is located 1 meter (about 40 inches) to 1.2 meters (about 48 inches) above the mail stop surface.
8. 150 mm to 300 mm (about 6" - 8") from the front face of the curb to the mailbox door so the postal worker can reach the mailbox without leaving the curb.
9. To provide space outside the "all-weather surface" for opening the mailbox door, it is recommended that the roadside face of a mailbox be set 8" - 12" outside the "all-weather surface" or the shoulder or turnout.

Both the U.S. Postal Service and local highway departments can regulate the type of mailbox and placement of mailboxes in a highway right-of-way. AASHTO's Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways has a model regulation for the accommodation of mailboxes and newspaper delivery boxes on public highway right-of-way (in Appendix A starting on page 21).

Adapted from the Traffic Information Program Series Tip N. 10 by the Institute of Transportation Engineers, Florida Section District 10 and AASHTO's Guide for Erecting Mailboxes on Highways. AASHTO's Guide can be found on our web site under written resources. The Vermont Local Roads fact sheet includes a sample ordinance and Vermont Local Roads sample letter to residents.

