Virginia Supplement to the 2009 Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD): Frequently Asked Questions

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1. **Does the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD apply to locally maintained roadways?**

   Localities that maintain their own roadways (such as independent cities and towns) have the *option* of adopting the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD and/or the Virginia Work Area Protection Manual. If adoption is chosen, the Virginia Supplement and/or Work Area Protection Manual would apply to all of the roadways under the jurisdiction of that agency. All jurisdictions that maintain roadways in Virginia are encouraged to adopt the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD and the Virginia Work Area Protection Manual in order to promote uniformity of traffic control devices throughout the Commonwealth. If adoption is not chosen, the agency still must comply with the National MUTCD per the US Code. Since the Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) considers the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD to be a "better" version of the MUTCD for use on Virginia roadways, FHWA may require compliance with the Virginia Supplement on Federally-funded local roadway projects, even if the locality has not formally adopted the Supplement.

2. **What modifications can be made to the appearance and application of traffic control devices in the Virginia Supplement?**

   Minor modifications to word messages in signs contained in the Virginia Supplement are permitted. Major modifications to the specific design elements of a traffic control device that do not preserve the essential appearance characteristics of the device, including *any* modification to symbols or colors, are only permitted by following the formal Experimentation Process described in Section 1A.10 of the Virginia Supplement. Prior to submitting a Request for Experimentation, the Office of the State Traffic Engineer in Virginia must be consulted to ensure the needs of all regions are taken into consideration in any experimentation request.

3. **In what cases should the fluorescent yellow-green color be used for warning signs?**

   In accordance with the National MUTCD, fluorescent yellow-green warning signs are required in school areas. In Virginia, as required by the Virginia Supplement to the MUTCD, a fluorescent yellow-green background is required for all bicycle and pedestrian warning signs as well. The fluorescent yellow-green color is also used for indirect references to pedestrians, such as the WATCH FOR CHILDREN (W15-V1) sign or the Playground (W15-1) sign. The fluorescent yellow-green color should only be used for signs that warn motor vehicle drivers of bicycles and

pedestrians. Warning signs on shared use paths which warn bicyclists of conditions on the path itself should be yellow.

4. In what circumstances should the RESCUE SQUAD sign be used?

The RESCUE SQUAD (W11-V1) sign should be used in cases where there is a rescue station nearby, but no fire apparatus is present. The RESCUE SQUAD (W11-V1) sign shall not be used in conjunction with the Emergency Vehicle (W11-8) sign on the same sign structure.

5. Are signs such as AUTISTIC CHILD, BLIND CHILD, or DEAF CHILD permitted in Virginia?

No, these signs are not permitted in Virginia. The only similar sign that is allowed is the WATCH FOR CHILDREN (W15-V1) sign, which is specifically authorized by the Code of Virginia. Each locality in Virginia (including counties) must establish a process to accept and review applications from citizens for WATCH FOR CHILDREN (W15-V1) signs. The locality must then forward the approved requests to VDOT for installation. Signs specifying specific disabilities are not allowed as it would be impractical to assume transportation professionals would be able to evaluate and confirm such disabilities, and in order to preserve the privacy of the family of the child with a disability.

6. What line widths should be utilized for longitudinal pavement markings (e.g. edge lines and skip lines)?

A "normal line" is defined in the Virginia Supplement as 4-inches wide, and is the default pavement marking width for most roadways. Some roadways, such as limited access freeways, require the use of 6-inch pavement markings. Any roadway may utilize 6-inch pavement markings if engineering judgment determines a need for them. A "wide line" is defined in the Virginia Supplement as a line that is twice the width of the pavement markings utilized elsewhere on a specific roadway segment. On a road with 4-inch pavement markings, wide lines would be 8-inch lines, and on a road with 6-inch markings, wide lines would be 12-inch lines.

7. When should a flashing YELLOW ARROW signal indication be considered?

Use of FYA is only considered once an engineering study has determined that protective/permissive phasing operations are appropriate for the candidate intersection location. As noted in the Supplement, FYA should not be used at locations where permissive only operations are used. The five section signal indication continues to be VDOT's default display for protected/permissive lefts, with the use of flashing yellow arrow (FYA) being optional. FYA is recommended for locations where lagging and/or lead/lag protected/permissive phasing, including preemption phasing sequences, may introduce a yellow trap condition. Consideration is also given to providing consistent signal indication (five section

or flashing YELLOW ARROW) treatments along a corridor with multiple signalized intersections operating with protected/permissive left-turn phasing.

8. Where is a 335-foot, one-way no-passing zone required?

One-way no-passing zone markings are required on two-lane, two-way roadways for 335 feet in advance of an intersection where total side street ADT exceeds 500 vehicles per day. The markings should prohibit passing in the direction of travel towards the intersection. The markings should also be utilized approaching private driveways and other entrances to the road with a total side street ADT of over 500 vehicles per day.

9. Should all words on guide signs utilize Clearview lettering?

No, only mixed-case words (utilizing uppercase and lowercase letters) such as destination names, street names, and other geographical feature names should utilize Clearview lettering. All other words appearing in all uppercase letters must use the FHWA standard alphabets. Clearview lettering is only permitted on positive contrast guide signs, which consist of white lettering on a green, blue, or brown background. Before designing a sign panel layout to include Clearview lettering, the FHWA webpage "Design and Use Policy for Clearview Alphabet" should be reviewed for detailed guidelines on the use of Clearview lettering. The website is available at the following link:
http://mutcd.fhwa.dot.gov/resources/clearviewdesignfaqs/index.htm

10. Can letter heights be reduced on overhead street name signs?

Designated letter heights are Standards (requirements) in the Virginia Supplement, and as such, a designer cannot deviate from those minimum letter heights under normal circumstances in which the minimum heights can be achieved and site conditions allow them. However site-specific deviation from the Standard is permitted where it is not feasible or practical to comply, such as in cases where the overhead street name sign will not physically fit on the mast arm. One such example is the case where pole placement alternatives are limited due to R/W and underground utilities, and given the location of the pole in relation to the travel lanes, the distance from the pole upright to the nearest signal head is shorter than the spacing needed for a sign panel with the required lettering size. In such cases, with a documented engineering study, the letter heights may be reduced. In order to comply with the spirit of the Standard, the letter heights should be as large as possible to meet the Standard as closely as possible.